

VARIATIONS
ON A PERSONAL THEME

LANDON RONALD

Glen Annie
For August Child
Christians 1929

VARIATIONS



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Landon Knobell.

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1922

VARIATIONS ON A PERSONAL THEME

BY
LANDON RONALD

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TO
LILIAN AND ERNEST

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

This little book belongs to you both. It was your affectionate interest, your ceaseless encouragement, and your unwavering confidence which gave me the courage to carry it through.

It may recall to you those few happy weeks we spent together amidst beautiful scenery and sympathetic surroundings.

Accept the dedication of it as a small token of the gratitude and affection of

Yours very sincerely,

LANDON RONALD.

INTRODUCTION

(Con Innocenza)

To write a good set of Variations it is essential to have a good theme. Herein lies the obvious weakness of this little work. Had the theme been a stronger one, it would have been easy to have written more interesting Variations. I am not to be blamed for this. But I am seriously to be blamed for having allowed myself to be persuaded into writing them at all. The dedication on the preceding page will give a clue to the identity of the real culprits, and they alone are guilty. Naturally they will be compelled to read this book, and therefore I am satisfied that “the punishment fits the crime.”

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Mainly Autobiographical

Mainly Autobiographical

I HAVE constantly been asked to write my reminiscences, but have always refused—chiefly because I keep no diary and I have a very bad memory for dates. No one, however, who has been before the public since he was sixteen, and has met every kind of person, interesting or otherwise, can fail to have had some amusing experiences and a few anecdotes to tell.

I can at least lay claim to having had a sense of humour all my life. Again and again have I been saved from utter boredom at stodgy committee meetings, at dull entertainments, or on long railway journeys, by seeing the funny side of things. I probably inherited this from my father, who was a great raconteur, loved a joke, and had a splendid sense of the ridiculous. As a boy at home I was considered the “funny man,” and can boast at the age of ten of having amused my family—and as we all know, the family is *not* given as a rule to laughing at or encouraging home-grown products. Corney Grain and George Grossmith

were my two idols, and I was filled with an ambition to give an entertainment at the pianoforte similar to theirs. This ambition has never been realised. From the age of four or five I gave such obvious signs of being exceptionally musical, that never for one instant was the possibility entertained of my ever becoming anything but a musician. My dear mother not only gave me my first pianoforte lessons, but in every way guided and helped me in my studies, selecting my masters, and even standing over me with infinite patience to see that I performed my allotted tasks at home. Oddly enough, I was a lazy boy and would always shirk work if I could. This is all the more curious when it is remembered that from the age of seventeen I have been an indefatigable worker and that to-day I never give up unless ill-health compels me to do so. Everything in music came remarkably easily to me, especially writing songs. I was trained, however, to become a pianist and violinist, but heartily disliked having to practise either instrument. At the age of fourteen I wanted to give up both in order to become a conductor, a composer, and a musical critic, and wrote this fact to my mother. It may seem odd to have written it instead of saying it to her, but Dr.



MYSELF (AGED 10) AND MY MOTHER

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Johnson never said a truer saying than, “A letter cannot blush.” This was just my case; I was too shy to tell her, so I wrote a note and crept upstairs and placed it carefully on her dressing-table. She met me with a very definite refusal, partly because she quite rightly deemed my desire as a mere excuse to escape the necessary work that all pianists and violinists have to do. To those two instruments I was therefore kept, and after some six months’ private tuition under Lady Thompson for composition, Franklin Taylor for pianoforte, and Henry Holmes for violin, I was entered as a student at the Royal College of Music. I should like to add here in parenthesis that Lady Thompson was the wife of the celebrated surgeon, Sir Henry Thompson, and was in her early days known as Miss Kate Loder, a brilliant pianist. In her old age she was paralysed and couldn’t move hand or foot. She was a magnificent musician and the kindest of friends, and her influence on my early musical days was deeply marked.

On one of my journeys to the Royal College of Music on the Underground Railway, an absurd incident occurred which I still remember with great clearness. I was standing on Praed Street Station platform when I noticed an old man in a

huge fur coat smoking a pipe. Some ashes of the pipe fell on his coat and it began to burn. I ran up to him and informed him of the circumstance. He seemed greatly perturbed and thanked me in the most effusive terms and said that he would never forget my action. He would not leave me and would not stop thanking me, and travelled with me as far as South Kensington Station, asking me all about myself. He took my name and address, and said that I should hear from him, as he wished me to have a little souvenir of an action he would never forget. I heard nothing for some days, though with childlike curiosity I anxiously awaited the knock of the postman ! One day a huge parcel arrived addressed to me. In the greatest excitement I opened it, and it turned out to be at least a couple of hundred religious tracts of all kinds with a very cheap edition of the Bible and some ancient and modern hymns. This was the old man's way of showing his gratitude.

I left the Royal College of Music at the age of sixteen and a half, being a very good pianist, a fair violinist, a composer of some pretty tunes, and equipped with a thorough knowledge of the orchestra and orchestral music through having played first violin in the college orchestra for a



"I LEFT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC AT THE AGE OF SIXTEEN
AND A HALF"

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considerable period. Among those who were fellow-students of mine, and who have since made names for themselves, were Robert Hichens, Hamish MacCunn, Howard Talbot, W. H. Squire, and those excellent accompanists Messrs. F. A. Sewell and Liddle, besides many others who hold prominent positions on the concert platform and as well-known teachers.

My first engagement followed soon after I left the college, and came about thus. I received a letter from a fellow-student saying that a pianist was wanted to play the difficult pianoforte part of "L'Enfant Prodigue," a musical play without words, which had just been produced with enormous success at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. I was asked to go and see Mr. Alfred Moul, who was then a theatrical agent, and later became chairman of the Alhambra Theatre. I did so, and my interview with him was decidedly amusing, and both he and I often laughed about it in after-years. I was an independent, somewhat self-satisfied youth, and he was the practical very busy man with little time and few words to waste. He informed me very curtly that a trial of pianists was being held the next day at the theatre, and that if I cared to attend I could do so. I was living at home at this time and my father allowed

me a few shillings a week pocket-money, and I didn't feel that there was any urgent necessity for me to earn anything. But I went to the theatre more out of a desire to prove to Mr. Moul that I was considerably better than he imagined than for any other reason. The composer, André Wormser, was there; Charles Lauri, who was running the piece, and Mr. Moul, and behind them there were about twenty pianists all waiting to be heard. My turn came and I played a very showy rhapsody by Liszt. My success was very marked, and I was at once asked to play from sight some of "L'Enfant Prodigue," which I did with the greatest ease. Charles Lauri was so carried away with enthusiasm that in a loud whisper I heard him tell Alfred Moul not to let me go out of the theatre and to settle with me there and then. I had no idea of my value and scarcely realised what a weekly salary meant. Whatever they offered to pay me I knew I should have for pocket-money, and before I overheard Lauri's remark I began to see visions of two golden sovereigns per week to spend as I liked. When Moul, therefore, took me aside and told me that he was instructed to offer me the job, and asked me what my terms would be, with a beating heart but without a moment's hesitation I replied,

“Ten pounds!” What possessed me to do so, or how I had the effrontery, still remains a mystery. But when my suggestion was immediately agreed to and I was not kicked out of the theatre as I feared I should be, I was scarcely able to find my voice to say “Thank you.” I played “L’Enfant Prodigue” over 300 times, and went on tour with it through England and Scotland.

I have to confess that it was at Glasgow on this very tour that, through no fault of mine, I had my only experience in life of being drunk. Our acting manager was a good fellow and liked to do his very best for the little company, and at each town he sought out some form of amusement to fill up our days. At Glasgow he discovered that we could get to Loch Lomond and back in time for the performance, and although it was in the month of December, it was arranged for us all to get up very early one morning, to meet at the station and to take the train. Unfortunately it turned out to be one of those pouring wet mornings in which Glasgow seems specially to revel, and by the time we had arrived at the little station where we were to go upon the steamer, there was the most awful Scotch mist that can be imagined, and we were all shivering with cold.

The acting manager took me aside and said, "Look here, my boy, you will get a chill; you look frozen. Come and have a hot Scotch toddy." I had never heard of a Scotch toddy and had no idea of what it was composed, but the word "hot" appealed to me and I assented gladly. I gulped down a very long drink which burnt my throat most horribly, but which warmed me through and through immediately. In about five minutes, however, my head began to swim and I had that awful feeling that I hadn't the remotest idea what I was doing. I remember creeping back ignominiously into a third-class carriage, which was eventually, I believe, shunted on to a siding, and some two hours afterwards I was found on the floor amid certain pieces of orange-peel and much dust, and with a head on me that no words can describe. I was promptly taken back to Glasgow and put to bed to revive for the evening performance, and that was all I saw of *Loch Lomond*!

Playing the piano in "*L'Enfant Prodigue*" proved to be my first and practically my last appearance as a pianist. It is true that I have played in public on a few rare occasions since, but my serious intention of ever making a career as a pianist dates from the last performance of "*L'Enfant Prodigue*" many years ago. I made

up my mind to become a conductor, although my youthful appearance was a great drawback, as I found that managers were shy of trusting such a boyish-looking individual and that orchestral men had little or no respect for me. I eventually succeeded, however, in obtaining an engagement to conduct comic opera on tour. This I did for a year or two, obtaining invaluable experience, though the remuneration was small and the life an unpleasant one. Naturally I could not afford to live at hotels, and very often I would arrive on a Sunday fairly late in the evening, leaving my baggage at the station and having to hunt for rooms in a large town without knowing my way about. Having obtained them, I often experienced the most horrible cooking and more often suffered from dirt. I remember passing a most terrible night in one of the big northern cities through finding the bed crowded with horrible insects. On upbraiding the landlady about it the next morning, it was explained to me that an actress had been sleeping in the bed the previous week and had as her companions two pet dogs ! Incidents such as these were innumerable, although I am led to understand that present-day conditions have vastly improved, and that the life of an actor or actress on tour can be made

extremely comfortable without going to expensive hotels.

Signor Boito, the famous composer of "Mefistofele" and the man who arranged the Libretti of "Otello" and "Falstaff" for Verdi, was over in this country, and I was invited to a party given by Mr. Albert Visetti to meet him. It was on this occasion that I met and made friends with the well-known conductor of Covent Garden Opera, Signor Luigi Mancinelli. Chiefly through the influence of Signor Mancinelli and my father I was engaged by the famous impresario of that time, Sir Augustus Harris, who appointed me to take up the duties of coach and répétiteur at Covent Garden Theatre. Although for the next few years I was destined to have some of the most heart-breaking experiences, some of the most awful snubs, and some of the hardest work that has ever fallen to the lot of a young man of nineteen, I still look back on those days as being the most interesting, the most valuable, and the most influential of my life. I had to be at the theatre every morning at ten o'clock, and seldom got away before midnight, while regular meals were literally an unknown quantity. During the opera season I believe I did everything excepting sweeping the floors and keeping the place clean.

I was at everybody's call, and all the work that other coaches didn't want or care to do was put on my shoulders. By the time six months had passed I really felt that I had mastered my job. I was sent on a provincial operatic tour which Harris had arranged, the company including the Sisters Ravogli (who had created such a furore in "Orfeo"), Lucile Hill, David Bispham, Joseph O'Mara, and about twenty other artists of all nationalities, a large chorus and orchestra. The tour was a financial failure, but it gave me fresh and valuable experience. It seems extraordinary, considering the enormous success that opera is to-day in the Provinces, that this tour, with such fine artists and a really first-class chorus and orchestra, should have been a failure. At so-called "musical Manchester," I remember that the night we gave the first production of the "Meistersinger," Albert Chevalier was giving one of his recitals next door at the Free Trade Hall. The "Meistersinger" scarcely drew five hundred people; Chevalier was absolutely packed out, and hundreds were refused at the doors.

My second season at Covent Garden proved in every way eventful. I was then beginning to be recognised by certain of the great singers as a capable coach, and Mr. Arthur Collins (the present

managing director of Drury Lane Theatre), Augustus Harris's stage manager, was extremely kind and took the warmest interest in me. He used to allow me privileges which he would grant to but few, one being that I was permitted to stand in the "prompt corner" to watch the performance when I had nothing else to do, so that I could note how all the great singers phrased and interpreted their different rôles. This was the period when the de Reszkes were at the height of their fame, and the list of artists engaged included almost all the greatest singers of the world. I have a list before me now as I write, and find that amongst those who were announced to appear during this season were Mesdames Melba, Albani, Calvé, Nordica, Ternina, Emma Eames, Ella Russell, Marie Brema, and Schumann-Heink; and Messieurs Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Tamagno, Van Dyck, Alvarez, Maurel, Van Rooy, Plançon, Renaud, Ancona, and de Lucia. I remember that the caste that usually appeared in the production of "Romeo and Juliet" included Melba, Jean de Reszke, Edouard de Reszke, and Plançon, and I can recall a unique performance of "Carmen" with Jean de Reszke as "Don José," Calvé as "Carmen," Melba as "Micaela," and Ancona as "Escamillo." Augustus Harris cer-



All' amico carissimo e mio alter ego
Landon Ronald , & suo affetto
G. Mancinelli

Londra giugno 1896

LUIGI MANCINELLI

tainly did things in the grand manner. He gave the British public castes which undoubtedly have never been equalled since; castes which, alas! would be financially prohibitive nowadays, even supposing such supreme artists were available. Singers are proverbially the most difficult people to deal with, but Augustus Harris had the special gift of getting them to do anything and everything he wanted. He commanded their affection as well as their respect. I worked under him for close on eight years, and still have in my possession my first three years' contract at a salary of £4, £5, and £6 per week. His early and unexpected death was a great loss to the operatic world, and left a void I do not consider has ever been filled.

On one occasion at Drury Lane, Harris had persuaded Mancinelli to direct a few operas during the English opera season. On the morning of the performance he was rehearsing "Lohengrin" with a certain English tenor who could not be persuaded to sing one particular phrase in time. Mancinelli, after much swearing in Italian and French, eventually got the unfortunate singer to do it correctly and made him promise to practise it well before the night's performance. Sure enough at the performance the tenor repeated the mistake he had made in

the morning and nearly put out the entire orchestra. Mancinelli, getting very red in the face, shouted to him in a raucous voice, "You are very beast," a literal translation of "Vous êtes très bête."

His anger was very violent and short-lived, and he had a curiously penetrating good-natured laugh, amazingly like the bleat of a nanny-goat. I remember an incident that occurred when the Sisters Ravogli were cramming the house with their performance of Glück's "Orfeo." Harris had the notion that it would be very realistic to have some actual nanny-goats on the stage in the scene depicting the Elysian Plains. I was sitting in the stalls with Harris just behind Bevignani, who was conducting, and we were eagerly awaiting the effect the stage picture would create. Our expectations were surpassed ! In the middle of Sofia Ravogli's solo, the nanny-goats began to bleat all over the stage, the audience tittered and laughed and the dramatic effect was ruined. Harris told me to rush around to Arthur Collins and get the nanny-goats off the stage as quickly as ever he could. After much signing and pantomime to the fat Italian choristers, these wretched animals were eventually pulled off amidst a roar of laughter from the audience. I went back to

my seat to find Harris furious. However, things settled down again, but to our horror we heard the bleat in the distance about a quarter of an hour after we had believed the episode to be closed. Harris got up and went on the stage himself, using unparliamentary language to Arthur Collins, and asking why the nanny-goats had not been taken entirely out of the building. Collins assured him that they were out of the building, when another bleat was heard. Harris shouted furiously, "Why, I can hear one of those wretched beasts now!" "Oh, no," said Arthur Collins, "that's Signor Mancinelli laughing at some story which Calvé has just told him." It was so.

Mancinelli could only speak a few sentences of broken English, but he was only one of many members of the company who made the most humorous mistakes. I was present when the immortal sentence of Arditì was shouted by him to a second violin who had been arguing with him : "Don't shpoke. If you no like, you went."

To digress from this period for a moment, one of the funniest experiences in connection with foreign pronunciation of the English language I had, in comparatively recent years, was when I was vainly endeavouring to teach Victor Maurel, the famous French baritone, a song of mine en-

titled, "Away on the Hill there runs a Stream." His great difficulty was to aspirate the "h" in "hill," and although I studied it with him for hours, he *would* sing "ill" instead of "hill." Eventually, two days before the concert, we got it fairly right, although, of course, he took the usual exaggerated deep breath before the aspirate. The day of the concert arrived, and I was accompanying him. Imagine my agony of mind when, as I was playing the introduction of my song, I saw beads of perspiration on Maurel's forehead as he began to sing. I knew that something terrible was going to occur and it did! He took a deep breath, looked round appealingly to me, and at the top of his voice shouted for all he was worth, "Haway hon the eel"!

In 1895 Madame Melba engaged me as conductor of her American tour, notwithstanding that up to that time I had chiefly acted for her as accompanist. We went right through the States and part of Canada, carrying an excellent orchestra, and, in addition to a concert programme, performed scenes from operas in the second half. I was away about six months in all, and on my return to London received a lesson which I ever remember. I was then twenty-two, so I shall be forgiven if I say that perhaps I returned with



A Landon Ronald

*Au Compositeur de grand avenir - au chef
d'orchestre de race - à l'accompagnateur
unique. Et, par-dessus tout, à l'ami le plus
le plus délicat, le plus fidèle et le plus sincère que je connaisse.*
Londres 1904-1905 - Son très affectueux V^{er}s Maurel

VICTOR MAUREL

what I may describe as a "swollen head." I had certainly hoped that the success I had achieved in America with the world's greatest singer would be known over here. I was soon to be disillusioned. The first man who met me said sympathetically, "My dear Ronald, how nice to see you again! Have you been ill? I haven't seen you for months!" Another acquaintance was curious to know "*what I had been doing in America,*" and on my entering Drury Lane Theatre I found that another coach and conductor had been engaged for the English opera season in my absence. All this helped to teach me that nobody is really missed, that everyone can easily be replaced, and that people really do not take any interest in any success that one may make abroad. I think for a young artist to leave London for any length of time, until his or her position is actually assured, is a great mistake. The budding young professional may do well to make a note of this.

The following year my accompanying led me to undertake the preparation of most of the great musical parties that were given at that period, and I met many valuable and useful friends and incidentally earned a good deal of money. It was about this time that I remember being present

at a large dinner party ; my host was a bachelor, a very famous man in Society who entirely lacked any sense of humour whatsoever. I always loved making people laugh—I do still—and I told a little story on that occasion at my end of the table which is a “chestnut” to-day, but in those days and on this particular occasion caused much laughter. It was as follows :

A man was brought up for stealing. The magistrate, addressing the prisoner, said, “What’s your name ?” The prisoner replied by making a noise somewhat resembling a sneeze or the escape of gas. “What’s your name ?” repeated the magistrate in firmer tones. The answer was the same, only more so. “Constable,” said the magistrate, very much perturbed, “what is this man *charged* with ?” “I don’t know, yer worship,” was the reply, “but I should think soda-water !” My host, who had listened with great attention, never smiled and seemed amazed at his guests’ laughter. After an awkward silence of about three minutes, he turned to me and said, “Now tell me, Ronald, what *was* that man’s name really ?”

One of those who were present on the occasion, and revelled in my host’s lack of humour, was Sir Arthur Sullivan. I well remember my first

meeting with this charming and remarkable man, who later in life became such a kind and good friend. I had written a little operetta (to which I shall refer later) with the undistinguished title of "Did you Ring?" and it had been accepted for production at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. I was to have about sixteen or eighteen in the orchestra. Now I had learnt to score for a large orchestra from my beloved master, Sir (then Dr.) Hubert Parry, during my student days. But he had never thought of teaching me to write for small orchestra—something much more difficult to do really well. So I got a letter of introduction to Sir Arthur Sullivan, who I was told would be willing to help me. I kept my appointment with the great little man in fear and trembling. He received me delightfully, placed me at my ease at once and almost made me feel that I was a brother colleague of his! I explained my mission, but he told me in the kindest manner that he never taught and advised me to go to a friend of his, an admirable musician, named Ernest Ford, which eventually I did. As I was taking leave of Sullivan, he asked me if I was going to the next Richter Concert. I replied in the affirmative. "Well," he said, "the wonderful Mozart in G minor Symphony is being performed. Go and

buy a pianoforte copy of it. Take it with you to the concert, listen well to the orchestration, and next morning score it yourself from the pianoforte copy. Then go and buy Mozart's full score, compare it with yours, and you'll learn much ! " It was the most wonderful advice ! By the time I had finished comparing Mozart's scoring with mine, I felt I would never again attempt to write for orchestra, small or big ! This advice stands as good for to-day as it did many years ago, and I hope, if these lines meet the eyes of any music students, that they may benefit as much from Sir Arthur's advice as I did.

The very last time I saw Sullivan was at a big private concert given by the late Lord Astor in Carlton House Terrace, when the great composer was nearing his end. He came to me and insisted rather petulantly that I should call myself Sir Arthur Sullivan, and he was to call himself Landon Ronald for the rest of the evening. It was a joke that placed me in an awkward position, and which fell very flat. I pointed out the incongruity of it all to him, and he left me quite in a pet, affirming that I had no sense of humour and would never enter into a joke ! Alas ! I never saw him again.

The First Time I Conducted

The First Time I Conducted

IT was a curious concatenation of circumstances which led up to my becoming a conductor, though, as I have shown in a previous chapter, the wish was always there and I was only awaiting the opportunity. It arrived sooner than I expected and found me unprepared. It all came about through that silly little curtain-raiser called "Did you Ring?" for which I had composed the music. The libretto was by a Mr. J. W. Mabson, whom I had met at Sheffield, and he got John Houghton (the editor of a paper called *Fun*, long since defunct, but very well known at the time) to write the lyrics. Charles Lauri, having made money over running "L'Enfant Prodigue," thought it would be a good idea to mount another play without words.

I wonder how many of my readers remember Charles Lauri in the hey-dey of his popularity. He was the famous portrayer of the Cat in the Drury Lane Pantomime "Dick Whittington," and perhaps no man ever impersonated so many

different animals on the stage with the same consistent success. He was a curious-looking little fellow off the stage. Short, clean-shaven, thin, very plain, and amazingly agile. One day, when I was seeing him into a hansom cab, he took my breath away by climbing on to the wheel, getting on the roof, and jumping from the top into his seat inside. The whole thing took a few seconds, and I saw the cabman rubbing his eyes, wondering if he had lost his senses. He loved playing this sort of joke, but there was a serious side to his nature and he was a pretty good business man, with a natural instinct for artistic things. His choice of "L'Enfant Prodigue" proved this, and his second production, to which I am now coming, was quite a delight, although it was a failure with the public. It was, like its predecessor, a play without words entitled "La Statue du Commandeur," but it lacked the simplicity, the charm, the pathos of "L'Enfant Prodigue," and the music was in nowise as good. It was superbly acted, the chief part being taken by Monsieur Tarride, who since those days made a big reputation for himself in Paris. The piece was too short to fill an entire evening's bill, and, in any case, curtain-raisers were all the fashion and were looked upon as a

necessity. I had the very thing ready and waiting. I trotted off with it one Sunday afternoon to Charles Lauri's house in Camden Town, played him the music, read him the libretto, and he accepted it there and then for production at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. It was put into rehearsal immediately, with two well-known artists of that period, Templar Saxe and Katie James, both of whom performed it admirably. I have some sort of idea that the theatre conductor asked me to conduct the first band rehearsal of my little piece, and that I tried to do so and completely failed. But I am in no way certain of this, so I would prefer not to count this as the actual first time I had a baton in my hand. "Did you Ring?" was received very well by the Press. It was on this occasion that *Punch* thought fit to make the joke on my name which has been used since in a hundred different ways. "This *lever-du-rideau*," said *Punch*, "is a bright and well-written sketch which should prove attractive. The authors, Messrs. Mabson and Houghton, were fortunate to *Land on Ronald* to compose the music." After a run of about three weeks, Charles Lauri thought he had dropped enough money over the two pieces, so he informed Tarride that he intended closing down. But

that didn't fit in with Tarride's plans at all. He couldn't afford to return to Paris as a declared failure in London. Something had to be done. He was a man of considerable means and made an offer to Charles Lauri to buy him out, lock, stock, and barrel, and run the theatre himself. The terms were duly arranged and Charles Lauri vanished from the scene. I had by this time become on very friendly terms with Tarride, whom I admired both as artist and man, and at his special request I would often go down to the theatre and spend an hour with him in his dressing-room. I sauntered in on the first Saturday *matinée* given under his own management, and found everybody in a state of excitement. Not getting anything very coherent from the French members of the company, I sought out the conductor, who was English, and he explained to me what had occurred. Tarride, being entirely ignorant of the way we ran a theatre in this country, had failed to provide the necessary cheque to pay the orchestra. It being Saturday, the doors of the Crédit Lyonnais were closed, and it was impossible to obtain the money. The members of the orchestra swallowed the tale with a lot of water, as they had been caught by foreigners before. Eventually, however, they were persuaded to play at the

matinée on the condition that they should receive their salaries before the evening performance began. As far as I can remember, the sum required was something between £150 and £200. Unfortunately, there wasn't twenty pounds in the house at the *matinée*. I took a cab to Charles Lauri's house to explain the position to him, only to find that he was somewhere in France. Tarride knew literally no one in London, and as the time approached for the evening performance the outlook could not have been worse. The meagre audience began to wander in, and by 8.15 the few dozen people present began to get impatient, hissing and clapping and showing other signs of resentment at the delay. The members of the orchestra stuck to their guns and steadfastly refused to go in. Eventually Templar Saxe went in front of the curtain and announced that, owing to the sudden indisposition of Monsieur Tarride, the performance that night could not take place, but that all moneys would be returned on application at the box office. A few boos and a few jeers, and the audience filed out. I always have thought it fortunate that someone had had the presence of mind to lock Tarride in his dressing-room, as he was a very powerful man, and was in such a state of violent anger at the behaviour of

the orchestra, that had he got anywhere near any one of them, there would undoubtedly have been great damage done !

I bearded the lion in his den and calmed him down and got him to talk rationally. I went with him to his hotel and we sat talking and planning until midnight. He had made up his mind to reopen the theatre on the Monday night, to pay off the present orchestra and conductor on the Monday morning, and not allow one of them in the theatre again. He insisted that I should in the meantime obtain another orchestra for him, rehearse it Monday afternoon, and conduct it in the evening. Although I had not the remotest idea where a single orchestral player was to be found, and although I was absolutely ignorant how to beat time correctly, I cheerfully and willingly undertook the job, and thought it all the fun in the world. Such is the confidence of youth ! I announced most casually to members of my family, just as if it were an everyday occurrence, that I had been appointed " the conductor of the Prince of Wales's." I was asked by my brother whether I was referring to the public-house in Harrow Road, the theatre in Coventry Street, or the son of His Majesty the King. Some people always will be funny at the wrong moment ! The

thing that worried me was the fact that it was Sunday, which meant my waiting twenty-four hours before I could get busy. I had duly settled in my own mind my plan of campaign, and sure enough on the Monday morning I was walking up and down Bond Street waiting for Keith Prowse, Ashton, and Hayes to open their respective doors. I had seen various advertisements of these firms announcing that they could supply bands for dances and parties, so why shouldn't they be able to supply me with one for a theatre? At all events, this is what I had hoped and believed might be arranged! Disillusion, alas! was quickly to follow. I shall never forget the expression on the face of the first man to whom I confided in a very meek voice that all I required was an orchestra of forty musicians to be at the Prince of Wales's Theatre by three o'clock that afternoon. He looked me up and down, twirled his horrid waxed moustache, and said in an airy, sarcastic tone, "And are we to deliver the goods packed in cases, or will you send the Royal carriages to fetch 'em?" I pleaded with him seriously, only to elicit the amazing retort, "'Ere, young fellow, 'op it, and don't act the giddy goat." I had never heard the expression before, but during the morning I heard many other

expressions which were new to me, but scarcely fit for publication.

After obtaining two or three indefinite promises that I should be supplied with some sort of band, I wended my way to the theatre after lunch, to find the stage-door entrance crowded with orchestral men holding their instruments of every description under their arms or in their hands. It appeared that the whole story had spread like wild-fire throughout the orchestral profession, with the result that hundreds of "unemployed" turned up on chance of obtaining an engagement. Entirely ignoring the fact that I had ordered at least three Bond Street orchestras, I promptly engaged forty men who gave me the most wonderful testimonials of their respective abilities, and within half an hour had taken my place at the conductor's desk and was endeavouring to rehearse them. I doubt whether such weird and uncanny sounds have ever been heard in a theatre before or since. Most of the men turned out to be "duds" who could neither read nor play, and I of course could not conduct. I was just asking a cornet player if he would be so kind as to play in the same key as the rest of the orchestra, when a message came from the box office that *three* orchestras were on

their way to the theatre. This was unthinkable, but sure enough they came. The Fates were very kind to me, as they all proved to be Hungarians who could only play czardas or a rhapsody. After being extremely courteous to them and getting them out of the theatre, I continued rehearsing till half an hour before the doors opened, and conducted from that night till the end of the run of the piece. It was the first time I had ever held a baton, and I caught the fever. Awful as the orchestra was, awful as my conducting was, I loved it all. Visions of conducting great concerts and great orchestras floated through my brain, though it was many years before those visions were to be realised.

And thus it was that I became a conductor.

About Melba

About Melba

MY friendship with this great singer dates back many, many years, and I can scarcely think of one milestone in my career without the name of Melba being in some way identified with it. As a matter of fact, my first meeting with her was actually on Covent Garden stage, when, as I have narrated elsewhere, I was a boy of nineteen, doing all the dirty (musical) work there was to do ! Why she ever took the slightest notice of me, or troubled to ask my name of Arthur Collins, will ever remain a mystery to me. She has so often told the tale herself in her own inimitable manner, that I repeat it here with the greatest hesitation. I have already said how much Arthur Collins favoured me in allowing me to stand—vocal score in hand—in what is called the “prompt corner” of the stage, so that I might see and hear everything. And thus it came about that one memorable night I was in my usual place during a

performance of "Faust," when in walked Madame (as she was then) Melba, about five or ten minutes before Mephistopheles shows Faust the apparition of Marguerite. She sat on a wooden bench, looked about her, saw me, glanced quickly at me, turned her head, then looked me up and down, and asked in a very direct fashion, "And who on earth are you?" I went hot and cold, red and white, tried to stammer out that I was a sort of maid-of-all-work but a humble worshipper of hers, when Arthur Collins bounced in, gave some direction to the limelight man above, and turning to Melba said in his quiet way, "This is the young fellow I spoke to you about, Madame. I want you to give him a chance." In telling the story she always declares that from that moment her every movement on the stage was followed by my "two great brown eyes." I think it most likely, because her singing was so far removed from everything I had ever heard in my life, that she completely hypnotised me. A night or two afterwards, Collins asked me if I knew Massenet's opera "Manon." I told him I never had heard a note of it. He seemed much perturbed and disappointed. I asked him the reason. "Oh, it's just bad luck," he said. "Melba wants to be coached in it, and I have told her I would send



To Landon Ronald
wishing him every success from
his sincere friend
London 1895 Nellie Melba

MELBA AS JULIET

you to the Savoy to-morrow morning at eleven instead of old X. As it is, I suppose I must send him in place of you." I had no intention of allowing such an opportunity to slip, so I begged him to get me a copy of the opera, and promised him that I would be note perfect in the morning. He slapped me on the back, saying, "That's the right spirit, young fellow. You'll do!"

At 11.30 that night off I walked with a copy of "Manon" under my arm, to the bed sitting-room I occupied in Cambridge Circus, determined to sit up all night rather than fail to justify whatever Collins had told Melba regarding my powers. I think I finished my studies about 5.30 in the morning; and then I was so excited that I couldn't sleep; I just dozed and kept on waking up with a start, convinced that I had overslept. I was very nervous when I was eventually ushered into Melba's sitting-room and found her waiting for me. She was quite amiable and nice, but lost no time in superfluous conversation. She seemed to take it for granted that I knew the opera I had come to play, but explained that she was singing it the following week, and wished to refresh her memory by going over her particular part. And go over it she did with a vengeance! She would repeat one passage or recitative a dozen times until it satis-

fied her. I have heard people talk about what a marvellous thing it must be to be born with a gift such as Melba has, but how little they know the work that is necessary before that gift reaches the state of perfection which makes it unique! There is no new Patti or Melba to-day; and I fear the reason is not so much that there are no great voices, as because the young people will never have the patience to practise roulades, scales, trills, month in and month out as their great predecessors did. They want to get to arias and songs before they are in any sense prepared—to run before they can walk. At the end of the practice, Melba asked me a few questions about myself, and paid me some charming compliments about my touch on the piano and the patience I had shown. I told her that my ambition was to become a great conductor and accompanist, and she took me seriously and encouraged me. Suddenly it occurred to her to ask me to play one or two of her famous arias for her. I knew them all and was at my ease by that time, and played them really well. She became enthusiastic, and went into minute details as to what she wanted here and what she wished there, seating herself at the pianoforte and actually showing me. She told her maid to bring her a big

pile of songs, and made me play Tosti, Bemberg, Hahn, Gounod, Lalo, and many of the songs of that period, with the result that, as I left her, she uttered a single sentence, which probably meant little enough to her, but everything to me in the world : “Remember, that for the future you are Melba’s sole accompanist.”

And for something like fourteen consecutive years she kept to her word and had no one else to play for her. It was only when my work became so heavy that it was impossible for me to travel with her, that she reluctantly got someone in my place. But during those fourteen years, what fun we had, whether it was in America, or on tour in England, or in London itself ! One tour in particular stands out in my memory, and that was under the ægis of the late Percy Harrison of Birmingham, the best-known concert-impressario of his time. Huge crowds, thunderous applause, lots of polite officials, policemen, and hotel servants, hundreds of autograph hunters, heaps of motoring, plenty of fun, very little time or inclination to work—these are a few impressions left after a Melba concert tour. To those who are not in the habit of travelling with Royalty, a short tour with a famous prima donna is strongly recommended as the next best thing ! Perhaps

I should qualify this by saying a famous prima donna with Melba's temperament. From the moment she rises till bed-time comes, always full of fun; laughing incessantly, telling one joke after another, recounting all sorts of experiences with much humour, and for ever brimming over with mirth and merriment. It is contagious ; we laugh with and at her. A hard-worked man like myself must perforce forget all the worries and troubles of life and make merry too, or feel out of it. But here's the motor just arrived to take Dame Nellie to the concert hall. Of course she leaves half an hour before she need ; she always does that for trains and concerts, with the result that she has never been known to be late in her life. There is a crowd waiting in the hotel hall downstairs, and a much larger one outside with three or four policemen keeping order. "Oh, ain't she beautiful ?" is heard on one side. "Look at her real *diaminds*!" shouts an excited voice from the top of a lamp-post. At the stage door another large crowd to pass through, and on reaching the artists' room piles of autograph books and letters. One little girl hasn't bought sweets for a month, so as to be present to-night ; another little boy confides that he has a great longing to kiss a great singer like Melba. (A wag

promptly remarks that he knows plenty of “ little boys ” suffering from the same trouble.)

About this time Melba suddenly discovers she has no voice. This may disconcert the uninitiated until the first solo is over, but those who are “ in the know ” are prepared for the statement and sympathise with a twinkle in their eye. Then the interval comes and the artists’ room is bombarded by people hoping to get in by some means or other. All their efforts are in vain. A London policeman couldn’t be more polite but more resolute than Mr. Percy Harrison in his refusal to allow anyone to pass that sacred portal.

“ But I am a friend of Madame Melba,” and—“ And so am I,” is the rejoinder, “ and that’s why I cannot let you pass.”

The concert is over ; crowds rush round to see the diva leave, amusing themselves until she comes by making remarks about her Rolls-Royce and her chauffeur, who never takes the slightest notice. Here she is ! Shouts of “ Bravo ! ” and “ Oorah ! ” burst forth ; a mounted policeman keeps the road clear, and off we go back to the hotel to enjoy a quiet little supper, perhaps the hour that all artists enjoy the most in their lives.

Next morning it is decided to motor over to Liverpool. It is only forty miles, and she

should do it easily in a couple of hours. We leave in the most brilliant weather, and everything goes well until the chauffeur discovers that something has gone wrong. I never notice it, but he does, which I, in my blissful ignorance, consider very wonderful. The "something wrong" being duly righted, off we go again, spinning merrily along at a very legal rate, when without the slightest warning a most awful explosion occurs and the motor is brought to a standstill. I feel myself all over to see if any bits of me are missing, and finding myself whole, I learn that nothing worse than the bursting of a tyre has occurred. The optimistic French chauffeur assures us that he can put a new tyre on in a *petit quart d'heure*, so Melba suggests that we should stroll on and let him overtake us. We accordingly begin to stroll, and it seems that we are strolling through lonely country lanes for the longest quarter of an hour on record. Eventually we find that we have "strolled" about four miles, and that it has taken us nearly an hour and a half. I admired a sweet old eighteenth-century house, and got barked at by a vicious dog for doing it! Most horrible burglar-looking tramps were liberally tipped, partly out of sympathy, but mostly out of fear. But here comes the car, and without

further adventure I find myself landed at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. At night another concert, with similar scenes of enthusiasm, similar crowds, similar—but wait! One little episode varies the order of things somewhat. Many of my readers may remember a phenomenal little violinist, who made his début as a boy of ten, called Franz von Vecsey. This was just previous to the advent of Mischa Elman, who practically killed Franz von Vecsey's success. There is no denying the fact, however, that von Vecsey had genius, and Melba got to know the little boy well and was most enthusiastic in her admiration for him. The little chap on this occasion was among the audience, and in the interval rushed round to kiss his “liege tante Melba.” More jokes, more fun, heaps of chaff. “Franz cannot play a violin; all he can do is to eat chocolates.” With mock humility and a low bow, Melba handed a violin (belonging to a violinist of the party) to young Franz, and suggested that he at once disprove such a statement. The challenge is accepted, and without a moment's hesitation the little fellow leans against the pianoforte and, facing his small audience, plays an unaccompanied prelude of Bach. Immediately there fell over us all a feeling of awe and wonderment, and we listened spellbound to

the remarkable phrasing, the beautiful tone, and the astounding execution of this little wizard. A few moments elapsed before we all regained our usual spirits. Melba was affected as much as, if not more than, any of us. Franz gets kissed by everybody, and I couldn't help thinking of the different effect I produced when I used to play the violin. Certain it is I never got kissed afterwards ! Franz obviously liked it, and would have played another piece on the same terms, but the interval was over and we had to get back to work. With an affectionate leave-taking and a parting kiss for "Tante Melba," the little chap was taken back to his seat in the hall.

On to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Sheffield, Bradford, and then back to dear old London which we all love so well. One concert differed but slightly from another, the enthusiasm being identical in almost every town. Touring under such conditions is great fun, excepting for the inconvenience of having to live in one's trunk !

I have been on many tours, orchestral and otherwise, with all kinds of artists, but I have never found a more delightful travelling companion or a kinder, merrier chum. Yes, that is what Melba is on tour—just a dear good chum.



MELBA AND MYSELF
From a Photograph taken on Tour

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More about Melba

More about Melba

ONE of Melba's most marked characteristics is her bluntness. She says what she means and means what she says. I remember her plain speaking causing a little scene at Paddington Station which tickled my sense of humour. It was at the time she had a house at Marlow. After singing at the opera, or indeed almost under any other pretext, she would always have a special train. But on this particular Saturday afternoon she chose to travel by the ordinary train, accompanied by her maid, a foreign violinist of repute who was on a visit to this country, and to whom she wished to pay some attention (and whose name once again I forget), and myself. It was in the height of summer, and the train was packed. Just as we were about to depart (having found seats in a carriage where soon afterwards at least five people were standing), a regular English dude, with an eyeglass in his eye and a drawl, sauntered up to our carriage and addressing Madame Melba, who was nearest the window, said

in a very affected voice, "Is there any room here?" "Can't you see?" was the prompt reply, "we are more than full up, unless you wish to sit on the floor." The young man stared at her for a second and drawled, "Oh, no! I should prefer to sit on your lap," and moved away. A minute's awful silence reigned, but immediately the train was well on the move, our gallant foreign fiddler friend got up from his seat in great excitement, and shouted at the top of his voice out of the window, "You plackguard! You scoundrel! If you kam here, I gif you one punch in ze nose." The wrath of this chivalrous defender of the fair sex only subsided when the train was well away from the young man, left behind on the platform, roaring with laughter, and shouting, "Come on, fruggy, I'll knock you out in the first round."

A few days afterwards I received an invitation to spend Sunday at Marlow, as Jacobine was staying with the prima donna. I must admit they made a funny couple together. The heavy, ponderous, learned Hungarian fiddler, used to being listened to with awe and bated breath; and the vivacious, chaffing, light-hearted prima donna, throwing all seriousness to the wind, and heartily disliking hero-worship in her own home.

They were in very truth the two extremes meeting, and yet Joachim's fascination and admiration for Melba were very real and very sincere. As far as I remember there was only one other person present, Mr. Arthur Davis, a Stock Exchange magnate, a well-known "first-nighter" and patron of concerts and opera. After dinner some informal music began. Joachim played with me several of the Brahms-Joachim Hungarian dances, and played them wonderfully. Then Melba sang a Mozart aria with violin obbligato, and eventually Joachim and I played the Kreutzer Sonata of Beethoven. Just as we were about to begin the last movement, I discovered to my dismay that we had missed the last train back to town. Davis and I had to get back, so what was to be done? There was only one way—a special train! The local station-master placed every possible obstacle in the way, but eventually, on being persuaded that the matter was of vital importance to the State, the special train was duly obtained. It was composed of one saloon carriage and an engine, and when Davis was called upon to pay for it I remember him remarking that it was the greatest and cheapest concert he had ever been to in his life.

For several years I conducted Sunday concerts

at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool, in the summer, and Melba on many occasions came and opened the season for us by appearing at the first concert. It was on one of these annual visits that an incident occurred quite worth relating. The great diva had sung innumerable encores, and could not make up her mind what to choose for another. Just as she was going on to bow her acknowledgments once again, she said to me, "Come and play 'A Little Winding Road' for me"—that being a song of mine which she sang a good deal at that time. Oddly enough, it was originally written for a contralto—Clara Butt, to be precise; but owing to certain difficulties with publishers which it is unnecessary to go into here, it was never sung by her. It is a song (one of a cycle called "Four Songs of the Hill") which has been a great selling success, and the artist who first sang the complete cycle was that exquisite singer (who has now retired) Miss Muriel Foster. As it was very much in vogue at the time, I happened to have been playing it in the contralto key a great deal. It was fairly natural, therefore, that on the sudden demand of Melba to play it for her, I should strike up the original key—two or three tones lower than the soprano key. The diva had not sung a bar before she also realised it, and in

the most natural manner imaginable, stopped and said in her very carrying speaking voice, "Landon, you are playing it in the wrong key." I laughed, played a few chords of transposition, and began again. She caught my eye and we both burst out laughing, with the result that the whole audience took it up, and that it was *the* success of the evening.

A year or two after I became principal of the Guildhall School of Music, I was most anxious to get so great a singer and so dear a friend to come and give the students the benefit of her advice and great experience. After very much persuasion, I got her to promise to read them a paper "On Singing," written by herself. It is very curious that at that time she could neither read nor speak well to a public. During and since the war I have heard her make admirable little speeches without fear or hesitation, but at the particular period to which I am referring, her nerves, as a rule, completely prevented her doing herself justice. Realising all this, she asked permission to come to the school a day or two previously and rehearse her essay on singing in the theatre where she would have to read it. This impressed me very much, because it showed how serious she was about everything she undertook. I duly sat

in front with one other friend of hers, and she went on the stage and began reading. Continually she stopped and assured me she could never do it, and continually I assured her that she was doing splendidly. She went away very "fussed" and unhappy, but promised that she would not disappoint me by keeping away altogether, as I rather feared. We had made great preparations to give her a royal reception. The chairman and committee, all dressed in their mazarine gowns, were there to receive her; hundreds of girls had donned their white dresses with red sashes; and an address of welcome and a small souvenir of the occasion was to be presented to her by the chairman. Her entry into the theatre was the sign for an enormous outburst of cheering, such as even Melba could have seldom experienced. The chairman having duly performed his part, it was my turn to say a few words about the great artist whom we were entertaining. This done, she got up with the manuscript in hand to reply. But the cheering and applause were deafening, and at least two minutes must have elapsed before she was allowed to begin. She was cruelly nervous, and this overwhelming reception unnerved her the more. I was sitting next her on the platform, and felt, after her few opening phrases,

To Laurie.
From



Allie Melba, 1897
Long Joachim

MELBA AND JOACHIM

that she would never get through. I was but too right! Another heroic attempt to master her nerves failed, and, with a pathetic smile and a gesture of regret, she turned to the audience and said, "I'm awfully sorry, but I cannot go on." The students did not know whether to applaud or keep silent. But I at once got on my feet, took the manuscript from Melba's hands, and announced that I had arranged with her to read it on her behalf. It was a difficult thing for me to do, because I had never read it and had only heard part of it at the private rehearsal to which I have alluded. I believe I got through all right, but it was a job I should not care to have to repeat. It is the only time during the many long years of our friendship that I have known Melba break down before a public, and I believe it was a unique experience on her part.

The great singer has not had many "narrow escapes" during her travels, but one that occurred at Chicago when I was with her is worth relating. She was announced to give a concert, and the newspapers, in true American fashion, had written columns about "the great musical treat in store," but dwelling more on the fact that "the great singer has with her all her most priceless jewels, and will wear them the night of the concert."

Melba had been in the habit of occupying the same suite of rooms in the Auditorium Hotel (they were called "the Melba Suite"), and it caused her great annoyance when she was informed that on this particular occasion they were already occupied by a lady and her husband. As after-events proved, this was fortunate for the prima donna. On the day of the concert two well-dressed men entered the hotel, walked upstairs to the "Melba Suite," and ringing the bell, were admitted by the lady in question. Promptly closing the door behind them, one of the ruffians, producing a pistol, said, "If you scream, I'll shoot! Show me where you keep your jewels." The poor lady had the presence of mind to answer, "My husband's inside, and if you don't leave, I'll call him." This happened to be untrue, but in any case it made no impression on the men, as they believed they were speaking to Melba, whom they knew was not married. Accordingly they proceeded with their work, one keeping the pistol pointed at his victim's head, whilst the other ransacked the rooms. Finding nothing of any particular value and afraid to prolong their stay, they cleared out a wardrobe, taking several coats and trousers, and escaped. The unfortunate lady completely collapsed. When

the story leaked out, Melba was most sympathetic and kind, and did everything she could to help. Since that fortunate escape she has ceased to travel with many jewels, at any rate any of great value.

On Hearing People Sing and Play

On Hearing People Sing and Play

As may be imagined, I have had, and still have, many applications from people who want me to hear them sing and play "just as a great favour." They generally admit, "I know you're a very busy man," but they always believe that they have a right to take up my time by virtue of their "exceptional talent." All these swans, or certainly ninety per cent. of them, turn out to be geese, and years ago I was compelled to make a definite charge, just as a doctor does, because I found that they made too great a claim upon my small leisure, and that "just ten minutes of your valuable time" generally meant at least half an hour.

But not even the payment of a fee deters those who are determined to have my opinion, so several hours a week pass in my granting private auditions to those who want the benefit of my advice. Here, again, my sense of humour has on several occasions prevented me from being utterly bored or intensely annoyed.

I remember a young lady coming to sing to me in my room at the Guildhall School of Music, and bringing with her a white-haired lady as her accompanist. This good lady monopolised at least ten minutes of the interview explaining that she suffered terribly from nervousness, and that, although she often accompanied the local choir at bazaars and the local tenor at the vicarage, playing before me was a very different thing, as she had often heard me accompany and knew that I could do it quite well. I begged her to forget my youthful indiscretions, and assured her that all I was there to do was to listen to her niece's singing and not to criticise her accompaniments. This brought forth another long tirade about her niece's great gifts, until very impatiently, I fear, I begged her to allow me to judge for myself. With a certain amount of delicate persuasion, I got her to the piano, where she found the stool first too high and then too low. Then came the operation of taking off her gloves. After that, an argument ensued as to what the niece was to sing to me, and as neither could make up her mind, I eventually chose the aria from "La Bohème," "Mia ch'iama Mimi," which, as most amateurs know, begins with a single note played by the right hand. The dear old lady played this



To my friend
J. D. Ronalds

Feb. '96

Frederic H. Cowen

SIR FREDERIC COWEN

one note all right, and the niece started off, but ne'er another sound came from the pianoforte ! The singer went on, casting beseeching glances at her so-called accompanist, who turned the pages with meticulous care, but never attempted even an odd chord. Gradually the singer got flatter and flatter, and towards the end of the aria gave her aunt such a furious glance, that it seemed to galvanise the old lady into some kind of control over her petrified faculties. The result can better be imagined than described. The old lady attacked the piano almost viciously, but naturally she tried to play in the key in which the piece was written, while the singer was by this time about four tones lower. The singer stopped abruptly, looking unutterable things at her aunt, who smiled quite complacently and said, " My dear, you shouldn't be nervous of Mr. Ronald ; he can't judge of your great gifts if you don't sing in tune." The poor girl was too choked with fury to reply. I took pity on her, sent for a proper accompanist, heard her sing another song, and by the time I had got rid of both of them I was utterly exhausted, and found that the interview had lasted just fifty minutes !

On another occasion the interview was much shorter, but a great deal more unpleasant and

unfortunate. The Guildhall School of Music was closed, so I made the appointment at my home, where I had a big double drawing-room with parquet floor, which made a very admirable music-room. This time it was a dramatic Italian soprano, who when asking for an interview had enclosed a vast quantity of Press cuttings from small Italian newspapers and had written me a three-volume novel about her great achievements and her artistic triumphs. She arrived—very fat and very excitable. She insisted on singing me a very long aria from Verdi's "Aida," and proposed to follow that with a selection from "Cavalleria Rusticana," and then one or two Italian songs. She evidently intended to give me a recital, but little did I guess how a merciful Providence was to prevent her nefarious designs. I should, perhaps, interpolate here the statement that I had as a pet a great big beautiful tabby cat with eyes like emeralds, and that as every room in the house was open to him, he generally selected a very thick rug we had in the drawing-room. On this particular occasion he lay stretched out in the laziest possible position, enjoying a real deep cat slumber. The Italian lady asked permission to rearrange my furniture, as she wished to act the scena she was about to sing. I hated her

for it, and ungraciously consented. Everything being in readiness, her accompanist started off with a tremendous fortissimo, and one or two photo-frames fell down. But this was as nothing compared with what followed. The Italian virago sent chairs spinning into corners, skated on mats over my parquet flooring, and, after further various acrobatic feats, suddenly dropped to a scarcely audible pianissimo. But it was only the calm before the storm. In the meantime, my tabby had sat up to take notice. He crept under the sofa and kept his emerald eyes glued on the performer, swinging his tail ominously. I tried to call him to me, but my efforts were fruitless. The storm gradually rose and my Italian friend got more dramatic than ever. She was just preparing to yell out a great top C, which had caused many people to faint in the Turin Opera House, when to my horror I saw my tabby take one leap and bury his claws in the ample bosom of the great prima donna. The greatest confusion ensued. The pianist, a young fellow about twenty-six, who was supposed to be a stranger, gave away the whole thing by crying out in Italian, "Oh, my mother, my beloved mother, art thou hurt ?" and the "beloved mother," who was not hurt at all, rapidly collecting her things, turned

on me and in pure unadulterated Italian poured out a volley of oaths such as I have only heard once, when a waiter dropped a whole trayful of glass at the feet of the proprietor of the restaurant. She didn't wait to be shown out ; she literally blew out.

About this period I was writing weekly articles on music for different papers, such as "The Tatler," "The Onlooker," and others. Feeling very keenly that some sort of recognised board should meet weekly or monthly for the sole purpose of advising young people whether they should adopt music as a profession or not, I wrote an article on this subject in "The Onlooker," suggesting that such a man as Sir Henry Wood or Sir Frederic Cowen should consent to act as chairman. This brought me such a humorous letter from Sir Frederic, that I cannot refrain from quoting it in full :

" 54 HAMILTON TERRACE, N.W.

" October 16, 1907.

" MY DEAR RONALD,

" Thanks for the copy of your article in 'The Onlooker.' Your words are true enough, and your suggested remedy a good one, but you don't know what you have done. You have probably made my life a greater burden to me

henceforth than it has ever been, and I expect soon to see crowds of young aspirants trying to get in here at the front door, or at the back, or over the wall. My hitherto peaceful retreat in the forest of ‘Saint Jean’ will become a pandemonium. If I refuse to hear them, my life will not be worth an hour’s purchase, and if I do hear them, I shall die from exhaustion and worry, and my epitaph will be :

KILLED BY LANDON RONALD IN THE ZENITH OF
HIS FAME, 190 .

Onlooker ! 'neath this stone I lie
Because no voices would I try ;
He set them on me for a whim—
In future may they *land-on* him !!

“ And this is the gratitude I get for promising
to perform your overture !

“ Yours ever,

“ FREDERIC H. COWEN.”

Stories Against Myself

Stories Against Myself

I LOVE telling stories against myself. Here are one or two for which I can vouch.

I sauntered into my club one hot afternoon and looked into the reading-room, which was empty save for two men—one a famous pianist, the other a stranger and one of the very ugliest men I have ever set eyes upon in my life. I scanned the columns of a few newspapers, and was about to leave the room, when my pianist friend called me, saying, “Let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. X.” We shook hands, and I thought him uglier than ever. He immediately began talking about my work at the Albert Hall and the Guildhall School of Music in the kindest and most flattering terms, and indeed there seemed little of my professional life of which he was ignorant. After about ten minutes of this I got rather “fed up,” and, pleading that I had to go and telephone, I asked him to excuse me. He at once burst forth, “I can’t tell you how delighted I am, Mr. Landon Ronald, to have met you, as

for years I have been a great admirer of yours. Quite apart from that, I must tell you that I was very anxious to know you, *as I am always being mistaken for you*”!

The ugliness of my physiognomy has more than once been brought home to me, but never more forcibly than by a certain photographer. And it happened thus. I had just been appointed principal of the Guildhall School of Music, when one of the weekly illustrated papers (for the life of me I cannot remember which) wrote and asked me if they might include me in a series of “*Celebrities at Home*” interviews they were publishing, and that if I consented they would send one of their own photographers to take portraits of myself, my study, etc. I agreed to all this, and the appointment was duly made. Punctual to the minute, a little red-nosed man arrived on a very hot June day, dressed in a black frock coat, white waistcoat, green tie, brown boots, and a sailor’s hat! He got to work quickly, taking portraits of various nooks and corners of my house, with obvious satisfaction to himself; fixed his camera in my study and informed me that now it was *my* turn to be taken. The poor little chap posed me in every imaginable position, made me sit down and stand up, placed me against

the mantelpiece, asked me to smile, to fold my arms, to look serious, and after each attempt, sighed and murmured, "Oh, dear, oh, dear!" I began to feel quite unhappy and uncomfortable myself, when I saw a light come into his eyes, and with a triumphant smile and a cockney accent he said, "I've got it! Go to your desk, Mr. Reynolds, sit down with some manuscript paper before you, and look as if you were a-trying to make up one of those pretty little songs of yours." I was out to get this trying interview over, so promptly did what he told me, with the result that my profile was turned to him. Back he went to his camera, placing a black cloth on his head, when I heard a plaintive little voice ejaculate, "Oh, my Gawd, no! That's worse than ever!" The interview ended by my giving him a portrait I had by me, and begging him not to trouble any more.

It was on a Melba tour such as I have described in a previous Variation, that an incident occurred which must take its place among these few stories about myself. Two years had elapsed since I accompanied Dame Nellie, when one day I had a telegram from her asking me to call. She informed me that she was going on a tour with her impresario (Mr.

Percy Harrison) through the English provinces, and that her accompanist from Paris was unable to come, and wanted to know if I could possibly go along with her, just to play her numbers and do nothing else. As a bait, she informed me she was singing a small group of my songs in the middle of the programme. She was far too dear and precious a friend for me to fail her when she really wanted me, so I agreed at once.

Scenes of triumph were repeated in every town we visited—with one notable exception. Wild horses would not extract the name from me, but I may just add that the town in question is better known as a great industrial centre than for its cultivation of music. Not that the people didn't crowd to hear Melba. They literally packed the hall, and extra seats had to be placed on the platform, right next to the grand piano ; but the great enthusiasm was lacking and Melba knew it. She bowed very coldly and was received very coldly. Her first item was “A fors è lui” from “Traviata.” The applause was dignified and restrained ; so was Melba's acknowledgment. After expressing her opinion of the audience to me in no uncertain terms, I thought I would comfort her by saying, “Wait until you sing *my* group of songs ! You won't get a hand.”

My prophecy, alas! was fulfilled, and I left the platform feeling like the criminal does when he leaves the dock after the jury have found him "guilty." Her last item was the "Mad Scene" from "Lucia," with flute obbligato, and I think I may safely say that no one ever sang this aria in any way approaching Dame Nellie Melba. The result was electrical even on this stodgy audience. They shouted and stamped and roared and cheered until, after bowing five or six times, she consented to sing Tosti's "Good-bye." Now I must just explain here that I had played this song for years by memory for her, just as I played my own songs without music, so that I didn't dream of taking the music with me on this particular occasion. I took my seat at the pianoforte and was just beginning to play, when a woman seated near me on the platform, possessing upper teeth which seemed to me to reach from her mouth to the keyboard, said to a friend in a very loud voice and with a pronounced Yorkshire accent, "Eh, lad, it's a shame! we're going to 'ave more of 'is stuff!"

When I succeeded Mr. Mylinarski as conductor of the Scottish Orchestra in November 1919, I made my début in Glasgow with many misgivings and fears. I had only paid flying visits there,

and had heard that the Glasgow people were slow in making new friends. However, everything went off with great éclat, and I felt it wouldn't be very long before the audience and myself would be on the friendliest terms. That has certainly turned out to be the case, as is proved by the fact that on the last night of the season the entire audience sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" and "Auld lang syne." This was the first experience I had ever had of the kind and it touched me deeply. Returning, however, to that first evening, I had shaken hands and said good-bye to the committee, and was just about to enter my taxi, when two little girls, with very red hair, asked me to sign their autograph book. "I shall have to do it in pencil," said I. "That's all right," said the elder, with an accent you could cut with a knife. The book being duly signed, I returned it to the girl, who, after looking at it, asked me in a very disappointed tone, "Aren't you Mr. Mylinarski?" "No," said I, with my most amiable smile, "my name is Landon Ronald." The girl turned to her companion and said, "Have you got any india-rubber, Jean?"

For many years I have conducted a series of promenade concerts at Birmingham similar to those which Sir Henry Wood has made famous

at the Queen's Hall. It was at one of these concerts that, owing to a curious lapse of memory, I was called upon to apologise to the audience. It was at the beginning of the second part of the concert, and I had it fixed in my mind that the first item was the *Suite de ballet* "Sylvia" by Delibes. Just for the sake of those who may not be familiar with this work, I may mention that it begins *fortissimo* and therefore requires a very energetic beat on the part of the conductor. As a matter of fact, the actual item on the programme was the overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," by Mendelssohn, which begins *pianissimo* for two flutes only. I took up my baton, and with a mighty effort, or, as a famous music-hall comedian would describe it, "with one mighty swipe," began to conduct (in my own mind) "Sylvia." The effect on myself and the audience is not to be described, as the big gesture from me and the tiny little sound from the orchestra were so incongruous. I looked at the orchestra hopelessly and wondered what on earth had occurred, or whether a joke was being played on me. My leader quickly whispered, "It's the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' Overture," upon which I laughed, and turned to the audience and explained to them the mistake I had made.

I was on such friendly terms with them that they joined in my laughter and applauded heartily.

Another story which I am very fond of telling against myself, and which I have recounted so often in public that I fear it will be a “chestnut” to many, occurred to me soon after I was appointed principal of the Guildhall School of Music. All the City Companies vied with one another to entertain me, a kindness which I deeply appreciated. I received an invitation to attend a banquet given in honour of the Fine Arts—I believe by the Drapers Company. Sir Alexander Mackenzie (the principal of the Royal Academy of Music) had promised to propose the toast of “Music,” and I was to be in that blissful position of not having to speak at all. On my arrival at their superb hall, I was met on the staircase by the clerk, who informed me that Sir Alexander Mackenzie had sent a wire saying that illness prevented his attendance, and that it devolved on me, as an official of the City, to propose the toast in his stead. This came as a great shock and incidentally spoilt my appetite. However, with the help of some admirable food and some good Scotch whisky, I was beginning to feel “fit for the fight” as the time drew near for me to speak. I had written down certain

notes on the back of the menu, and was just taking my final “wee drappie,” when the Master of the Ceremonies, who was an enormous man with a long black beard, came and touched me on the shoulder and said in a fairly audible whisper, “Mr. Landon Ronald, will you make your speech now, *or let the guests enjoy themselves a little longer?*”

Some Gramophone Experiences

Some Gramophone Experiences

IT must be over twenty-two years ago when I was approached by a Mr. Barry Owen (the then managing director of a little company in Maiden Lane called the Gramophone Company), who asked me if I couldn't help him to persuade really great artists to take an interest in the machine. Up to that time it had been looked upon as a toy for the nursery, and most adults hated it. But when I was asked to interest myself in it, a vast improvement had already taken place. It was no longer a toy machine which gave forth most unpleasant grating noises. The ten-inch record had been perfected, and was waiting to be put on the market, but Mr. Owen felt, and rightly felt, that it needed really first-class singers to show off its possibilities. It may be wondered why I was approached in the matter, so perhaps I had better explain that about this period I was spending my days during the summer among the greatest singers of the age, accompanying and coaching them, and that I was also brought

into contact with many famous instrumentalists, as their accompanist, at private at homes and concerts. During the rest of the year I was conducting comic opera at the Lyric Theatre under the ægis of Tom B. Davis, and conducting concerts for people like Melba and Kubelik whenever I got the chance, was just beginning to make headway as a song-writer, and accompanied at Court whenever a Royal concert was given. In other words, I was in close and constant touch with artists of all kinds, and Mr. Barry Owen had been advised that I was the young man who should be induced to take an interest in the development of the gramophone. I wasn't a bit enthusiastic about the project, and wrote a cold letter, saying that I was too busy to entertain the idea. But Mr. Owen was not to be put off by any such subterfuge, and he wrote such a charming letter begging me to lunch and afterwards to hear the new development, that I accepted the invitation. The first record he played me was "The Devout Lover," by Maude Valerie White, and the first verse hadn't ended before I seized his arm and cried in amazement, "Good Lord ! that's my friend Paul singing." (Paul was a young baritone with a beautiful voice, who afterwards committed suicide in America.) "Quite right," said Barry

Owen, "and gee-whiz ! just as *you* can tell that's Paul, so the public will recognise Melba, Calvé, Ben Davies, and all the great singers. Now, it's up to you to get them to sing and to make 'em realise that this is *the* invention of the future." His eyes glistened with enthusiasm, his fervour was contagious. I saw the enormous possibilities at once, but realised equally quickly that I should have to overcome the most tremendous prejudice that existed in the minds of all artists against what was considered by them an outrage on their art. However, I always loved a fight, as long as I felt I had right on my side, and I accepted Barry Owen's offer, and enrolled myself at once as an ardent believer in the gramophone. The first thing I did was to walk across to the old St. James's Hall in Regent Street, where I knew a Boosey ballad concert was proceeding, and seek out my dear old friend Ben Davies. I asked him casually what he was doing the following morning, and he informed me that he was playing his usual round at golf. Equally casually I asked him if he would care to sing a half-dozen songs instead for a sum of money equal to his usual concert fee. He looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and said, "Rather ! Is some old dowager giving a morning concert ? " And then followed my lengthy and enthusiastic

explanation. At first he turned me down in no uncertain manner. Gradually, however, I got him round, and eventually he consented on the grounds that it would be money easily earned, that he took my word about its artistic merit, and above all that he would be glad to give me a helping hand. I rushed back to Mr. Owen's office, full of excitement, and burst forth with the news. He shared my pleasure, rubbing his hands, walking up and down excitedly, all the time murmuring, "Gee-whiz, Ben Davies!" under his breath. He suddenly stopped and asked me, "What terms have you fixed?" I told him and his face dropped, he raised his eyebrows in astonishment and repeated the sum slowly and deliberately. I began to feel I had committed a crime. I assured him that that was the fee Ben Davies received for singing at a concert, and tried to prove to him that the investment must be a good one. It was no use. "I will never go back upon one of my lieutenants, young man," he said to me, his accent getting more nasal every minute, "but understand that this company is not out to house and keep concert artists. You have agreed to this absurdly high fee, but please to remember in future that we have never paid more than ten guineas, and that generally the artist is content

to make records for the mere pleasure of hearing his voice reproduced and we send him a machine as a present for that purpose." Ben Davies came, made records and in every sense of the word "made good." His records were big sellers for that period, and the fact that such a famous tenor had consented to sing made it easier for me to interest other artists. Incidentally I may mention that Barry Owen soon got over the shock of the fees, and soon grasped the fact that if he wanted a good thing he had to pay for it. As a result, when we arranged some more Ben Davies records, we paid him at least double what he received the first time. It would not be just or right of me to give away "state secrets" as to the terms that are paid nowadays to artists who make records for the gramophone. From the moment, however, that it was arranged that a royalty on each record sold should be paid to the maker of the record, the income derived by some of the successful ones easily exceeded that of a Cabinet Minister. It is an open secret that a man like Caruso made a fortune annually entirely from the sale of his records. But I honestly believe that if Mr. Barry Owen could know to what a pitch the fees of the artists had risen, he would turn in his grave!

I now turned my attention to the operatic artists and tackled Calvé and Plançon. The former sat on the fence a long time, and the latter accepted a fee of one hundred guineas to sing six records. My experience with Calvé is worth relating. She was one of the most fascinating women imaginable, but oh, so difficult to deal with. I won't worry the reader with all the negotiations which passed between us, but will come straight to the point when everything had been arranged for her to make the records. She was staying at the Hyde Park Hotel, and I was to fetch her in a "four-wheeler" and take her to Maiden Lane and accompany her on the piano-forte. After much running about after music she had forgotten, and picking up gloves she had dropped, I got her safely into the cab. I must admit that the offices in Maiden Lane at that time scarcely inspired confidence or gave the impression that they belonged to a large and prosperous company. Certainly they didn't impress *her*, because when I gaily said, "Here we are; let me help you out," a sharp rejoinder came, "Mon Dieu, but never in my life will I enter such a place. It is a tavern—not a manufactory! I shall be robbed there! I know it; I feel it in my bones! You have brought me to

a thieves' den ! ” I have read of a “ sickly smile ” and “ beads of perspiration.” I am sure I had both. Nothing I could say would alter her decision, and there was everyone waiting and everything prepared just two floors up. An inspiration ! I would get a very good-looking young man who had just entered the business, named Sydney Dixon, to come down and hand her her cheque ! I implored her to wait one minute, and I rushed up those stairs, quicker than I have ever climbed stairs before or since. Dixon was there sure enough, and I shrieked at him, pushing him downstairs, “ Her cheque ! Her cheque ! Give it her ! Look handsome ! Be nice—she *won't come in !* ” He did it all. And the next thing I remember was her saying in a cooing voice, “ Mais, vous êtes gentil, Monsieur. Merci beaucoup. Oui, oui, oui ; je vous suiverai avec plaisir. Venez, mon petit Ronald.” Upstairs we went and we began to record. But our troubles weren’t over ! In the middle of the “ Habanera ” from “ Carmen,” she turned and asked me if she was in good voice. Result—one record spoilt. Then, in another selection, she declared she could not proceed unless she was allowed to dance ! Another record spoilt ! All’s well that ends well, however, and eventually she

gave us some excellent records, and after much handshaking and gush on both sides, I got her back into her "four-wheeler" and was just about to drive away, when I saw Sydney Dixon tumbling downstairs at breakneck speed, shouting for us to "Stop!" Her cheque had been found, crumpled up in a corner of the room!

The singer who held aloof from making records for the gramophone, almost longer than any other, was Adelina Patti. Caruso, Melba, Tarmagno, Paderewski, Kubelik, and almost every other big "star" in the musical firmament had all ultimately capitulated, but Patti resolutely declined. Her opposition was eventually overcome through influence with which I had nothing to do. But her conditions were rather frightening to the Maiden Lane people. The whole of the machinery necessary for record-making was to be removed to Craig-y-Nos Castle, and everything, including the accompanist, was to be in waiting until the great prima donna considered she was in sufficiently good voice to sing. On hearing that I was in some way connected with the company, I received a charming invitation from her to stay for a few days, with the request that I should play for her. The whole scheme fascinated me, and I accepted the invitation with the greatest pleasure.

Those few days will ever remain impressed on my memory as amongst the happiest I have spent. She was a delightful hostess, and her husband (Baron Cederström) one of the kindest and gentlest of men. She was just a few weeks off sixty, and her voice in a room was still amazing. After dinner she would get me to play her some of "Tristan," which she had gradually learned to love, and would then, after a little persuasion, just see if she "was in voice." And it was then that she sang divinely—for her husband, her brother-in-law, and myself. We were all quite overcome by her great artistry, and agreed that the records must be made the next morning. She assented, and accordingly at twelve o'clock everything was made in readiness for the event. Her first selection was Mozart's famous "Voi che sapete." She was very nervous, but made no fuss, and was gracious and charming to everyone. When she had finished her first record she begged to be allowed to hear it at once. This meant that the record would be unable to be used afterwards, but as she promised to sing it again, her wish was immediately granted. I shall never forget the scene. She had never heard her own voice, and when the little trumpet gave forth the beautiful tones, she went into ecstasies! She threw kisses

into the trumpet and kept on saying, “ Ah ! mon Dieu ! maintenant je comprehends pourquoi je suis Patti ! Oh, oui ! Quelle voix ! Quelle artiste ! Je comprehends tout ! ” Her enthusiasm was so naïve and genuine, that the fact that she was praising her own voice seemed to us all to be right and proper. She soon settled down and got to work in real earnest, and the records, now known all the world over, were duly made. The pity of it is that they could not have been made in these days, when they would have been so infinitely better. I returned to London to find a magnificent sapphire and diamond pin and stud awaiting me, as a souvenir of one of the greatest singers of all times.

Accompanying at Windsor and Balmoral

Accompanying at Windsor and Balmoral

IT was in the year 1887 that I first had the honour of appearing before Queen Victoria—if playing second fiddle in a students' orchestra can be called “appearing before Queen Victoria.” I was just fourteen years of age, but looked somewhat younger. I was a student at the Royal College of Music, where I was studying pianoforte as my principal subject under Franklin Taylor; violin under Henry Holmes, and afterwards under Mr. Gompertz; composition under Sir (then Dr.) Hubert Parry; and counterpoint under Sir (then Dr.) Frederick Bridge. I had incidentally to attend lectures and play second violin in the orchestra under Sir (then Dr.) Charles Villiers Stanford. The students' orchestra was commanded to appear at Windsor at the great banquet which was given either on the night of the Jubilee or the following night. (I know for certain it was either one or the other, but I couldn't positively assert which.) I remember quite distinctly my great indignation at my dear

mother, because she would insist on my wearing a velvet knickerbocker suit which, for some ungodly reason, I possessed at the time. We were all to leave from Paddington Station in a couple of third-class coaches attached to a special train. This special train turned out to be the one which was to take the various Royalties to Windsor Castle. I can still feel the thrills I experienced when I arrived on the platform carrying my violin, and was told by some fellow-student, "You see that couple there? Well, that's the King and Queen of Norway and Sweden! Just standing by them is the King and Queen of Denmark. And you see these three men grouped together? Well, the old man is the Kaiser, and the man with the beard is the German Crown Prince (afterwards Kaiser Frederick), and the youngster is Prince Wilhelm." I remember I was quite enthralled, and felt very much the same as when I was first taken to Madame Tussaud's. Only two outstanding memories remain of what occurred at the Castle that night. The first is that some kind official hoisted me on his shoulder and let me have a peep of the great banqueting hall through a tiny little window, and told me to be sure and have a look at the gold plate, which duly impressed me. The second is my intense nervousness and anxiety lest I should

play a wrong note, as I was obsessed with the idea that Queen Victoria would at once detect it, and that I should be promptly sent to prison.

My next appearance before Queen Victoria was a very different affair, but oddly enough it took place on the evening of her Diamond Jubilee (or, once again, it might have been the night after). Signor Tosti (as he was then) occupied the unofficial position of Court accompanist. Tosti was an extremely popular song-writer of that epoch, and will always be remembered in this country by his setting of Whyte-Melville's lyric, "Good-bye," which Melba helped to make a household word. He was a great favourite at Court. The whole of the Royal Family were attached to him and Society followed suit. He and I were friends for years. I knew him to be a delightful *raconteur* and a *poseur* of the first order; he had a charm and fascination all his own, and possessed many qualities that endeared him to his friends. He could accompany his own songs admirably, but otherwise his powers in this direction were limited. And he was clever enough to realise his limitations. Thus it came about that, when Queen Victoria commanded Madame Albani and Monsieur Plançon (the greatest French bass of modern times)

to appear before her on the night of her Diamond Jubilee and also commanded Tosti to accompany them, he suddenly developed rheumatism in the hands, and asked permission to bring me to play all the items excepting his own songs. He further promised to turn the pages for me! Naturally I was mightily pleased to get the opportunity and sincerely grateful to him for giving it to me. I can see the whole scene as clearly as if it were yesterday. We arrived at Windsor, and a royal carriage was sent for Plançon and myself to take us to and from the Castle Hotel. Tosti and Madame Albani were staying at the Castle itself. When we arrived there we were first ushered into a small room and were then led to a large salon, where we found members of the Court standing about, with Tosti and Madame Albani keeping near to the grand pianoforte. There was a sofa for the Queen, near the piano, and a small table just by with a programme on it and a powerful pair of binocular glasses. I can say without fear of contradiction that we were all fearfully nervous. Nobody spoke much above a whisper, and the whole atmosphere of the room was horribly depressing and unnerving. Ten long minutes elapsed before the Queen entered, and then everyone seemed to me to be petrified. She

advanced very slowly, walking with a stick in her right hand, and leaning heavily on the arm of a stalwart Indian attendant, who seemed mightily proud of his job. She looked very much like the pictures and portraits I had seen of her, but was much stouter than I had imagined, and her expression was so very stern, that I got the impression (a wrong one) that something had occurred which had greatly annoyed her. I must conscientiously admit that I was frightened to death of her, although I had reached man's estate! I probably never accompanied quite so badly in my life as I did the first song or two, and it was only after I found her bowing very graciously to Plançon and smiling quite sweetly to Madame Albani, that I began to feel at all at my ease. The little concert only lasted about three-quarters of an hour, and at the end of it Madame Albani, Plançon, and Tosti were all presented to Her Majesty, who appeared to be most gracious and affable, more particularly to Madame Albani. Some kind equerry-in-waiting noticed me standing by the piano alone, came up and in the most charming manner congratulated me on my accompaniments, and added, "I'll have you presented in a minute." When the Queen had finished talking to Madame Albani, I

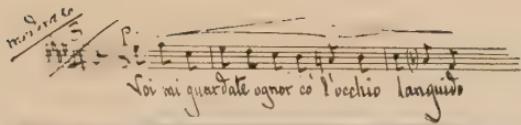
saw him approach her and say something in a low voice. She took up the big pair of glasses on the table and looked at me through them (although I was only a few feet away) and nodded her head. The equerry promptly came and, lightly holding my arm, duly presented me. I bowed low and wished that the earth would open. Tosti told me afterwards that I went as white as the proverbial sheet. My hopeless embarrassment was added to by the fact that for some unconscionable reason the Queen kept the opera glasses to her eyes and stared at me through them! I suppose she did this for about ten seconds, but it seemed to me ten years. It was just bad luck, because it was certainly not a habit of hers, as she had never been known to do it before. She thanked me for what I had done and my reply was a low bow. A pause ensued, and I didn't know whether to retire or stay where I was. Another ten years passed, and she remarked, "Accompanying is a very great gift," which elicited another bow from me. Still another pause, and then I was unmistakably dismissed from the Royal presence by a very sweet smile. I had the good fortune to walk backwards without upsetting anything or anybody, and soon recovered my spirits under the influence of a delightful little supper party,

with the Master of the Household as our host. The next day I received an enamel and diamond pin as a souvenir of the event. The Victorian jewellery could not be compared with that given by King Edward and Queen Alexandra, or the present King and Queen. Some of these designs are quite beautiful, but the pins and studs I had from Queen Victoria were all ponderous and big and could only be worn on very special occasions. Still, I was very proud of this particular pin, and am quite sure I should have adorned myself with it every day but for the fact that it took the form of a very big monogram V.R., and as my initials are L.R., I was afraid of my friends thinking I had suddenly taken to wearing my own initials as a scarf-pin.

This appearance at Windsor Castle as accompanist was the forerunner of many others, which call for no special mention, but one experience in connection with a command to appear at Balmoral is worth recounting. Others have given their impressions of Balmoral so infinitely better than I could ever hope to do, that it is not my intention to describe what actually occurred there, but just to narrate an unforgettable incident on the way home. A certain well-known American baritone, who was very popular in this

country twenty-five years ago, had been commanded to sing to the Queen on this particular occasion, and as usual I had to accompany. He was fearfully pleased with himself; indeed, the whole affair went to his head; and on the return journey he bored me unutterably by talking of nothing else but of his "wonderful success," and how "Queen Victoria had never been known to be so amiable to any other big singer or artist," etc. etc.! The luncheon hour arrived, and we went into the dining car, which was packed with people. Everything went smoothly till my friend was unable to get any potatoes with his meat. Once he asked, twice he asked, without any result. Imagine my horror when he got up and said in a very loud voice, "Waiter, are you aware that I have just been singing to Her Majesty Queen Victoria and that you have kept me waiting nearly ten minutes for a potato?"

It is well known that Queen Victoria, besides being very fond of music, was quite a good pianist herself. I was told an incident by one of the equerries at one of the many supper parties we had after a Royal concert, which I think worth relating. Queen Victoria had been told that one of her ladies-in-waiting possessed an extremely good voice and sang very well. She was asked by



Q
Mon cher Landon
G

Paolo Tosti
14 Jan. 03

PAOLO TOSTI

the Queen one evening to sing; and with fear and trembling she at once consented to do so, choosing a famous operatic aria which ended with a long shake. The Queen expressed her surprise that the performer never attempted to end the aria as it was written. Her Majesty turned smilingly to the performer's sister; who was sitting near her, and said, " Doesn't your sister shake, Lady X ? " to which the lady promptly replied, " Oh yes, Ma'am, she is shaking all over ! "

In the Theatre

In the Theatre

FEW musicians have, I suppose, had more varied experience with the theatrical profession than I have had. Indeed, the first fifteen years of my career were passed within the four walls of a theatre. First came "L'Enfant Prodigue," as I have told in another chapter. Then followed divers tours as conductor with comic operas under the management of Horace Sedger and William Greet. After that I went to Sir Augustus Harris and was conducting English opera at Drury Lane and Italian opera on tour, when Mr. Tom B. Davis got the lease of the Lyric Theatre, and engaged me to conduct his comic opera productions there. I stayed with him for some years, and I look back upon that engagement with the greatest possible pleasure, as he was always kindness itself and always made me feel that I ought to be doing much better and higher-class work. He is a man who always says very bluntly exactly what he means, and therefore anybody who works under him generally knows

exactly where he is. As an instance, I remember when he was managing director of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, that some little official who was a local man was continually making futile suggestions as to how the theatre should be run. I was present on one of these occasions when Mr. Davis turned round very abruptly to the young man and said, “Now look here, Mr. So-and-so, *your* ideas may be very good, but I prefer my own; so with your permission we will keep to them, and pray don’t worry yourself any further, or you may get brain fever!”

One other incident comes to my mind. It was during the run of “*Floradora*.¹” Mr. Davis had a habit of coming on the stage after the performance to discuss matters with myself and the stage manager, and there was one particular actress in the theatre who always rushed up to him most gushingly and inquired how his “*dear wife*” was, or she hoped “*dear Mrs. Davis*” was well. He hated gush of any kind, and whispered to me, “I know I shall be very rude to that lady one night if she continually bombards me with questions about my wife’s health.” The night, alas! arrived. Mr. Davis came on the stage as usual and was inclined to be irritable and bad-tempered. Up rushed the lady in her

most gushing manner, seized him by the arm and said, “And how is *dear Mrs. Davis?*” He replied in an acrid tone of voice and with an expression on his face quite indescribable unless you know the man, “Now, Miss S——, *my wife is very well.* When she is ill, I will let you know; it will save us a lot of trouble.”

He lent me for a few months to Marie Tempest, when she made her début as a serious actress in “*Nell Gwynne*” at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre, and I produced Edward German’s charming music to that play. This she followed with “*Masks and Faces*,” by her husband, Cosmo Gordon Lennox, for which I wrote the incidental music. After this I returned to my former post to conduct “*Floradora*” and to produce “*The Silver Slipper*.” It was at the end of the run of the latter piece that I determined to give up conducting in a theatre for once and for always, and turned my attention seriously to concert conducting. Nothing has ever tempted me to return to the theatre either for grand or comic opera, although I have had many tempting offers. This has not prevented me from writing or arranging or producing incidental music on several occasions during the last few years. Two such events stand clearly out in my memory. The first the production of

Gabriel Fauré's beautiful music to Forbes-Robertson's "Pelleas and Melisande" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; the second, arranging some of Beethoven's music to Sir Herbert Tree's production of the play called "Beethoven."

I consider that when Johnston Forbes-Robertson thought fit to retire from the stage this country lost the greatest tragedian of our generation. Apart from his wonderful histrionic gifts, he was one of the gentlest, dearest creatures in the world with whom to work. I thoroughly enjoyed my few weeks with him during the run of "Pelleas and Melisande." Maeterlinck was then caviare to the multitude, and the experiment was a very risky one financially. The caste was a superb one, Mrs. Patrick Campbell playing Melisande, Martin Harvey Pelleas, and Forbes-Robertson Goliaud. Ian Robertson (Johnstone's brother) produced the play, and, as I have said, Gabriel Fauré (the late Directeur of the Paris Conservatoire) wrote some beautiful incidental music, and I conducted. The play was only done at *matinées*, and as far as I can remember was not more than a *succès d'estime*.

A similar fate awaited Tree's production of "Beethoven," which Louis N. Parker had translated from the French. Tree asked me to go and



To Ronald
"The one" His Tyrant
Augustus Harris

SIR AUGUSTUS HARRIS

[Page 119]

see him. He told me quite frankly that he had already approached Richter, but that he had refused the offer, so I was offered the job. It appealed to me, and I put my heart and soul into it. For three weeks I had to pass my life at His Majesty's Theatre, and it was during this period that I got to know Herbert Tree really well. I found him a man of infinite charm, infinite pose (which had become almost second nature to him), and infinite kindness of heart. He was often intensely irritating in the theatre, and at times I found him specially difficult owing to his amazing ignorance of music. I remember I had taken the first few bars of the divine andante movement from the Ninth Symphony to accompany a certain touching speech in the play. He stopped me in the middle of it, complaining that the orchestra was too loud. I got it to play *pianissimo*. He stopped us again. He didn't like the clarionet. I pointed out that it was a *flute*, and that it happened to be Beethoven's own scoring, and that I was not prepared to alter it. It was all no good. He said he didn't like or approve of the scoring and wanted it out. I kept to my guns and refused, beginning to feel that I simply could not stand such ridiculous criticism. And herein came his sensitiveness! In two

minutes he had come round to me, laying his hand kindly on my shoulder, saying, "My dear Ronald, how thoughtless I am ! Here you've been rehearsing for four hours and had nothing to eat or drink. I've sent at once for some sandwiches and half a pint of champagne for you. That'll put you right." I thanked him cordially, and was really touched by his kindness, but whispered to him, "It's just like you—but the flute must remain in !" And it did ! He got the better of me, however, the following week. He asked me one night to supper in the dome, and we were talking about the piece and the music, when he suddenly said, "Ronald, as Beethoven dies, and the curtain falls, I want the orchestra to play the Ninth Symphony !" He gave forth this dictum with a magnificent gesture—worthy of Svengali. I am perfectly convinced that he had not the remotest idea what a symphony was, and that he had confused the term with the introductory bars or "symphony" to a song. However, I answered him perfectly seriously, but perhaps with a glint in my eyes, "A capital idea, my dear Tree, a great idea ! But I am only wondering whether the audience will remain seated for an hour after the end of the piece, and also whether you will mind paying a chorus of at least fifty or sixty

people, to sing when the play is over." He asked me what I meant by "an hour," and I explained to him that that was the length of the work. He said he had forgotten that, but I knew that he had never known it! A pause ensued, and after a little deliberation he said, "Can you do an excerpt from the choral part?" I told him it was possible, but I pointed out the expense. This was the last thing he considered, and it was there and then arranged that a chorus should be engaged and trained, and that the orchestra should play on the stage just for five minutes. The effect was most dramatic, and his suggestion proved to be right.

His sense of humour was a joy, and he was extremely fond of bringing out aphorisms of an amusing kind. There are so many stories connected with his name, which have been told over every dinner-table and printed in every paper, that to attempt to tell a new one would almost savour of impertinence. But the following anecdote, if not new, has, so far as I know, never appeared in print, and with many apologies to those to whom it may be a "chestnut," I venture to tell it now. As far as I can remember, it was just about this period that Signor Grassi, the great Sicilian tragedian, visited this country and gave a season at the Garrick Theatre. Tree,

as the acknowledged head of the profession, thought it would be a nice compliment to Grassi to give him a supper in the dome of His Majesty's Theatre. The date was arranged, and about fifteen or twenty of the best-known "lights" in the fine arts and science were duly invited to meet the great Sicilian. The party was in every way a success, and in a happy and graceful extempore speech Tree bade Signor Grassi a hearty welcome. It was getting very late, and about two o'clock or half-past two Grassi (who had had considerably more champagne than was good for him) made a move to go. Everybody at once rose to their feet, and Grassi (in true Sicilian fashion) began making his adieus by kissing everyone on both cheeks with great warmth. A look of horror came over Tree's face as he edged away from his guest, murmuring to Cecil King, his stage-manager, "Take him down in the lift, and I'll walk down. *I will not be kissed by Grassi.*" After some difficulty a hansom cab was obtained for the purpose of taking Grassi home and Tree was waiting to help him in, when, without the slightest warning, he flung both arms round Tree and kissed him fervently on both cheeks! Tree's expression was a study! He succeeded in controlling his feelings, however, and asked his guest politely and frigidly where he



from Yours very truly
Sir Herbert Tree
to Mr Landor Ronald 1897

SIR HERBERT TREE

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lived, so that he might direct the cabman. This seemed to puzzle Grassi. As a matter of fact, it leaked out afterwards that he was staying in some very shabby apartments in a very shabby street in Soho with a Sicilian ice-cream merchant—a friend of his youth. After some hesitation Grassi replied, “If you pleece, ask him to take me Garrick Teatro.” Tree, addressing the cabman, said, “Take this gentleman to the Garrick Theatre.” The cabman looked down scornfully, asked, “What the blankety blank does ‘e want to go to the Garrick Feater for at this time o’ night ? ” “I don’t know,” was Tree’s quick rejoinder, “but I should think he has forgotten to kiss the fireman.”

My latest connection with the theatre has been with my old friends, Arthur Collins and Alfred Butt, for their production of “The Garden of Allah.” When Arthur Collins wrote to me and asked me to write the incidental music for this play, it appealed to me greatly and brought back many memories. I have already shown how much Arthur Collins was connected with my youthful days. The same remark applies to Robert Hichens, the author of the book, who, as I have said elsewhere, was a fellow-student of mine at the Royal College of Music, and used to bring me

lyrics and ask me to set them to music, when we were both youngsters.

Sir Alfred Butt I used to know when he occupied a very small position in the office of the Palace Theatre. He and the acting manager at that period used to lunch every day at the Trocadero; where I always joined them, and it was a serious point when it came for us to toss who should pay for coffee, because neither Butt nor myself could really afford it.

It was, therefore, with no ordinary feelings that I once again found myself associated with Collins, Hichens, and Butt, all of whom I had known for over twenty-five years. Needless to say, the association proved of the pleasantest, and my work for the "Garden of Allah," which, incidentally, I consider is some of the best music I have ever written, was nothing but a pleasure from the moment I undertook it. I promised Collins to conduct the first night. Afterwards I wished I hadn't! It will be remembered by many that the great scene of the play is a sand-storm. I shall never forget its effect on the first night! When it was all over and the lights went up, I found to my horror that I was completely covered in sand from head to foot. I looked round to find the dress coats of the men in the orchestra also

covered with it. Some wag (as a matter of fact, I believe it was that wicked fellow Hermann Finck) wrote to Sir Alexander Mackenzie—"Have you heard about *Sand-on* Ronald the first night at Drury Lane?" Such outrageous jokes should be punishable by law!

To my dear friend
affectionately London Ronald



Arthur Nikisch

May 7. 1908

ARTHUR NIKISCH

VARIATION

X

Potpourri

Potpourri

I HAVE often been asked who I consider was the greatest conductor. The question always reminds me of the story of the lady who asked Liszt what he thought of Thalberg. Liszt replied, "He is the king of pianists." "But, master," rejoined the gushing damsel, "what of yourself?" "I am the only pianist in the world," said Liszt. Without in any way wishing to infer that I am emulating Liszt, my reply to the question about conductors is, and always has been, "Nikisch was the king of conductors." As such he appealed to me. In private life he was really charming. He possessed the most delightful speaking voice, perfect manners, great understanding and sympathy. He was a good raconteur, and told me a story of an unrehearsed incident which took place when he was conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Paderewski was to make his first appearance on this particular occasion, and at rehearsal the orchestra gave him an overpowering reception. One of the 'cellists became very excited

and stood up and made a little speech. This was an unheard-of breach of etiquette. But no cries of “Order!” or “Sit down!” had any effect upon him. It turned out that he was a Pole. He ended his oration, glowing with patriotic pride, thus: “ You see there Paderewski—my countryman—a Pole—(*crescendo*) he is like Cæsar—(*fortissimo*) ‘ He came, he saw, he *inquired* ’ ”!

* * * * *

I have known John Drinkwater for close on twenty years. I knew him when he lived in a tiny little house just outside Birmingham, and when he used to pay his shilling to come and listen to my promenade concerts there. He was a great enthusiast on music in those days and was a bit of a dreamer and much of a poet. Not a great deal of his work had been published then, but that which had appeared made its impression in the right quarter, though I remember it being criticised as being rather involved. I felt and knew that he would make a great name for himself, and always told him so. In 1908 a little book of poems by him was published by the *Samurai Press*, entitled “Lyrical and Other Poems,” and he sent me a copy with a charming dedication. Imagine my pleasure when I found that one of



all my love London Ronald

Words &

Music -

London

17.5.96

PUCCINI

them was written about myself. I don't think the book ever had much success, although there is some splendid poetry in it. I am so very proud of the poem he wrote about me, that, without asking the permission of his publisher or himself, I reproduce it here :

TO LANDON RONALD

Communion with the souls that vigil kept
Along the shores that girt the world's unrest
And gathered mighty music in their quest,
Is thine : the undiscovered joy that leapt
To trysting hearts what time their kindred slept,
The yearning and the wonder manifest
To these that through uncharted regions pressed,
Are of thine high election to accept.
Among the little line of votarists
To beauty's holiness, thou stand'st elate
Thy spirit stirred by revellings of fate,
Love's patient lips and fear's antagonists ;
Thou too art one of God's evangelists,
To sweetest revelation dedicate.

* * * *

Leoncavallo was a fat, good-natured fellow, very fond of eating, and somewhat ponderous for an Italian. I knew him in the nineties when he made a furore with his opera "Pagliacci." I met him once many years after, and it was then that he recounted to me an incident which occurred in a little town in Italy called Forli, known for its silk factories, but, of course, boasting its own

opera house, notwithstanding its population was not more than 40,000. He was there by chance and saw that a performance of "Pagliacci" was in the evening bill. Nobody knew he was there, and he decided to go and listen to it *incognito*. At the opera he sat beside an enthusiastic young lady, who noticed that he never applauded, but on the contrary showed signs of boredom. "Why don't you applaud? Don't you like it?" she asked. The composer, much amused, answered disagreeably, "No; on the contrary, I find it great rubbish and unoriginal. It is the work of a *dilettante*." "Then you must be very ignorant of music," she replied indignantly. "On the contrary," said Leoncavallo, "it is because I know what I am talking about that makes me so certain my opinion is correct." He then tried to persuade her that this particular aria was stolen from Bizet, that another motive was from Wagner, and that such-and-such a bit was taken from Verdi, and so on and so on. She looked at him with pity in her eyes and remained quiet till the end of the performance. "And all that you have told me is your honest opinion of 'Pagliacci'?" she asked, rising to leave. "Every word of it," said the composer. "All right," she said, "one day you'll be sorry

for it." He bowed low to her, and they separated. Next morning, reading the chief local paper, his eye fell upon an article, headed in big letters, "Leoncavallo on his own Opera 'Pagliacci,'" and to his utter confusion found his conversation of the previous evening written out word for word, and accredited to the proper source. The enthusiastic young lady turned out to be a lady reporter who recognised him at once, and who proved too smart for him. He swore to me that never since had he said an unkind word about his own music.

* * * * *

In 1894 Augustus Harris engaged an entire Italian opera company to appear at Drury Lane, and it was then that the first performance of Puccini's "Manon Lescaut" was given and then that I first met the composer. I like to look at the portrait which he gave me himself that year before returning to Italy. It is interesting to compare the position he held in this country at that time with that he occupies at the present day. "Manon Lescaut" had been acclaimed a masterpiece in Italy, and it remains undoubtedly one of the composer's finest works. It was a failure here on its production. We were simply soaked in Mascagni and Leoncavallo, and even some of the critics insisted that Puccini was nothing but a

imitator of those two great men. "Manon" was never a subject that appealed to the London public, but if they had it at all, they liked it with Massenet's music and rather resented Puccini setting it. No opera could have been presented with greater odds against its success. The book, as I say, was disliked ; the composer was practically unknown, and was at once condemned as a plagiarist ; the production and performance were third-rate. Notwithstanding all this, an Italian claque—which was the fashion in those days—made a tremendous noise, and at the end of each aria or duet, cheered and applauded lustily. Puccini was standing next to me at the back of the stage. He was extremely nervous, but every round of applause seemed to put fresh life into him. The reason for my telling this story is simple : It was on this occasion that Arthur Collins and I took hold of Puccini by each arm and by main force prevented him from going on and bowing immediately there was any applause. I have learnt since that it was the custom—the very reprehensible custom—in Italy for the composer to bow on a first night whenever the audience applauded, whether it stopped the action of the opera or not. We have done many outrageously inartistic things in this country, but,



TOSTI, MYSELF, SMAGGIASSI, EMILE ENOCH

From a Snapshot

thank heavens ! we have never descended to anything quite so low as that.

* * * * *

One of the kindest and best of men it has ever been my lot to meet—and to know him is to love him—is Emile Enoch, the head of the great firm of music publishers, Messrs. Enoch and Sons. He has known me since I was a little boy, and has been my publisher for thirty-two years. I have yet to encounter the man who has an unkind thing to say about him. I am quite sure that he will be the last to take offence at an old friend for telling one or two little stories against him. Over twenty years ago I wrote a song-cycle called “Summertime” (which contains that well-known song, “O Lovely Night”), and I marched off with it to him in great excitement, thinking I had written a masterpiece. He was very kind and gentle in his criticism, but I left him, with the manuscript still in my possession, after having been told that it was utterly useless writing music too difficult for anyone to play or sing. Back it went into my portfolio, which was already very full of songs that had been refused by every publisher, and there it remained for a year. One evening I confided to Ben Davies that I had got

this work for tenor and orchestra, and asked permission to play it to him. He was delighted with it, and showed it to Cowen, who was then the conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Society. He approved of it, and promised its production at a Philharmonic concert. Most excited at my good fortune, I offered it again to Mr. Enoch, who was not at all impressed by my story, and still maintained that it could never sell. I offered to give it him if he would publish it. He relented towards the end of the interview and said, “Simply as a friend of yours I will publish it and give you a sixpenny royalty, and if you get as much as a shilling postal order from me at the end of the year, you’ll be lucky !” The little work was duly produced, Ben Davies singing it magnificently, and Cowen prophesying a big success for “O Lovely Night.” The reception was all that could be desired, and the critics unanimous—excepting one, “The Times.” The gentleman who represented that paper on this particular occasion thought fit to make the amazing statement that, “although it was very scholarly, it entirely lacked melody.” Eventually it was published, and I heard nothing about it until a letter arrived asking me to call and see Mr. Enoch. I went and we talked about all sorts and manner of things,

and I was unable to fathom what he wished to see me about. At last, in a most shamefaced sort of way, he said, "Oh, by the way, my boy, we are getting innumerable inquiries for that song of yours in your 'Summertime' cycle called 'O Lovely Night,' and we think of publishing it separately. I suppose you have no objection to us doing it on a royalty?" Of course I hadn't, and of course he knew that I shouldn't have any objection, but that was his way of confessing that he had been wrong, and that I had "struck ile." And that song, and indeed the "Cycle," sells better to-day than ever it did in those days.

"Down in the Forest" is such a very well-known song of mine, that I need make no apology for telling here how entirely deceived both Mr. Enoch and myself were about its worth. I had written a cycle of songs called "The Cycle of Life," and felt somehow that the balance was wrong, and that another song was required in the middle of the album. I wrote and told the author, Harold Simpson, my feelings, and he promptly agreed with me, and sent me "Down in the Forest." I wrote the music in half an hour, took it to Enoch, and thought so little of it that I didn't even wish to play it to him. He

insisted, however, and I did so, making the remark, “It will never sell a copy, but it is just the bit of make-weight I want for the Cycle.” After hearing it he agreed with me in my sentiments; the only dissentient voice was that of his partner, who happened to be present, and said, “You never can tell. It might be a big seller.” He was very right in his prediction.

One more story, and I have done with my songs. Twelve years ago I took a mad liking for W. E. Henley’s poems. I set six of his “Echoes” and showed them to Mr. Enoch, who liked them immensely. I insisted that they should be called “Six Henley Songs.” He disapproved and argued. “But why *Henley* Songs?” said he. “Much better call them Regatta Songs!”

* * * *

One of the greatest friends of my life was Liza Lehmann, and I still mourn the loss of a very noble woman. I always enjoyed the true story her brother-in-law, Barry Pain, used to tell against her and Maude Valerie White. It appears that Liza was staying with her sister and her brother-in-law in the country, and was compelled one day to come to London. She complained to Barry Pain that she felt lifeless and weak. He



LIZA LEHMANN

recommended her to go to a chemist and get “Phospherne,” and she promised to do so. In the train she met Maude Valerie White. Liza informed her that she felt “run down,” and Maude White said she was feeling exactly the same. “Well,” said Liza very confidently, “it’s all right, because Barry has given me the name of a medicine that will cure me at once. You had better get some. It is called—er—er—oh, I know—*Chlorodyne*.” Maude White declared she would get some immediately they reached London. At the station they parted and met again the following week. “Oh, Liza,” said Maude White, “how clever your brother-in-law is! I took the *Aspirin* he recommended you to take, and it cured me at once.” “But, my dear Maude,” replied Liza concernedly, “it wasn’t ‘Aspirin’ I told you; it was *Owbridge’s Lung Tonic*. That is what I took, and it cured me!”

* * * * *

I received a letter one day from a stranger, asking me if I would tell her whether “Down in the Forest” was my favourite song, and if not would I mention the name of the one I preferred and the reason why. This letter gave me an idea. How interesting it would be to know which novel

was considered by its author to be the best he had written, and to get him to state the reason. I carried out the idea at once and wrote to many of the best-known living novelists. Almost without exception they complied with my request, and in one or two instances the correspondence led to acquaintanceship being formed and later to friendship. The collection is a valuable and an interesting one, and it is among my most treasured possessions. I was showing it one day to Edward Elgar, who carefully examined the books and read the letters. With a twinkle in his eye he turned to me and said, "H'm! It's a good way of getting a library for nothing, isn't it? Now you must write to all the greatest living painters, and get them to send you their favourite picture! It would be nice to have a Sargent, a Lavery, an Orpen, and a few others for nothing!" My reply was for *his* ears only, and would not pass the censor.

* * * * *

I met Caruso a day or two after he had made his début at Covent Garden Theatre in "Rigoletto," and we struck up a friendship which lasted till the end. He had the spirits of a boy; he loved a joke and was for ever drawing caricatures,

for which he had a great talent. I have dozens of letters from him; and almost every one contains a little humorous drawing of some kind. Apart from his art, I found it difficult to get him to be serious. It must be remembered that I am writing of him as I knew him ten years ago. Owing to the war, I never saw him after 1913. There is no need for me to refer to him as an operatic singer, because all the world knows that he was the greatest of his kind. But as a concert singer he was less known, although he sang more at concerts than is generally supposed. He was in enormous request during the season for concerts given at private houses, and he would receive as much as four or five hundred guineas for singing at one of these functions. And how he hated doing it! But I think the thing he dreaded most were the many "commands" he received to sing at Court. Although King Edward and Queen Alexandra were the most gracious of sovereigns, Caruso suffered agonies of nerves when he had to sing before them, and he once told me that he would prefer to sing "Othello" twice through in one evening, than have to sing two songs at Court. The surroundings of the concert hall were equally distasteful to him. He came up to Blackpool to sing for me at one of the

Sunday concerts, and the methods he employed were both original and interesting. He would only allow himself to be announced for one solo in the first part of the programme and one solo in the second half. He arranged with his accompanist to have five encores ready after his first appearance, and five more after his second appearance. The result was that he never came on and bowed. He simply sang the item on the programme, walked off the platform amidst a hurricane of applause, promptly returned with an encore, and repeated this performance until the five numbers had been sung. After this, wild horses would not have dragged from him anything more. He had given his audience twelve songs, and that sufficed. I remember him bowing at Blackpool with a big coat on, hat and stick in hand and smoking a big cigar. The audience took the hint, and eventually ceased applauding.



Innumerable are the stories I could tell and the impressions I might give of such dear friends as Edward Elgar, Henry Wood, Edward German, Thomas Beecham, Kubelik, Kreisler, Mischa Elman, Irene Scharrer, Arthur de Greef, Mark Hambourg, and many others ; but my experience



A Mr Landon Ronald
Souvenir de Enrico Caruso
London 27/6/902

ENRICO CARUSO

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teaches me that it is a fatal error to give the public too much of anything. I heartily dislike either to conduct or listen to long programmes. I have enough stories left to make one or two more "Potpourris"; but in the meantime I feel I have sufficiently imposed my memories on a kind and most forbearing audience. If an encore is really demanded . . .

*Speaking Seriously : I, About the Guildhall School of
Music and Other Matters*

*Speaking Seriously : I, About the Guildhall School of
Music and Other Matters*

OWING to the fact that the Guildhall School of Music occupies a great amount of my time, I feel that it is deserving of more than a passing reference. Although I only intended and only promised to remain in the position of principal for three years, I find that eleven years have rolled by, and I am still occupying that position, with even more enjoyment and more enthusiasm than I did during the first three years. It is perhaps worth telling how I came to be offered the post, more especially as at the time of the election so many false statements and tales were circulated. When my predecessor (Dr. Cummings) was taken ill and resigned, the Chairman of the Music Committee was asked to perform his duties until a new Principal was appointed. I might add, for the information of those who do not know the rules and regulations of the various committees which are formed from members of the Court of Common Council, that a new chair-

man is elected annually, and that it is only under the most exceptional circumstances that any chairman is reappointed for a second year's office. In the year 1910, the chairman of the Guildhall School of Music was a well-known city solicitor, a very popular member of the Court, and a good amateur musician, named Mr. John R. Pakeman. Although at the time I had never met him, I had heard of him as being a man of exceptional charm, with a great predilection and a sympathy for art and artists of all kinds. I was spending my holiday that year at Blackpool (where I was combining business with pleasure by conducting some Sunday symphony concerts), and it had been arranged that my old and valued friend, Max Mossel, a fiddler and concert-giver of great distinction, should spend a week or so with me. He informed me that the night before he had left London, he had accepted the invitation of a certain operatic singer, whose name I forget, to go to her box at Covent Garden Theatre, to hear Destinn in "Madame Butterfly." He was introduced by his hostess to a "tall, good-looking man, Mr. John R. Pakeman," and in the course of conversation this gentleman confided to Mossel that he and his Committee were seeking the right man for the post of principal of the

Guildhall School of Music. Mossel at once mentioned my name, and I am told the suggestion was received with enthusiasm, and a promise made that we should be brought together immediately on my return to London. On hearing all this, I definitely refused to have anything to do with it. I was a conductor and composer, and had no intention of giving up work which I loved so well. Mossel tried to overrule all my objections, and on leaving me to go abroad, said, "There can be no harm in your meeting Mr. Pakeman, and I am going to send him your London address so that he may write and arrange a meeting." And this is what occurred. Mossel wrote to Pakeman a postcard saying, "In accordance with my promise, I am sending you Landon Ronald's address.—Yours truly, Max Mossel." And he forgot to add the address. Mr. Pakeman wrote to him, pointing out the omission, and Mossel, after a week's delay, replied apologising and saying how sorry he was, but that he now enclosed my card. There was no enclosure. A third time Mr. Pakeman wrote, and a third time it is said that Mossel replied, but unfortunately he directed the envelope wrongly, and the letter may still be at the dead-letter office. My whereabouts is not very difficult to find in London, however,

and I soon received a letter from Mr. Pakeman asking me to dine with him at his club. I went with the determination to dismiss the subject of the Guildhall School of Music in a few minutes, and I left having given him permission to bring my name before his committee, and consenting to leave everything in his hands. And that was the beginning of a great and true friendship, which has never been marred by an unkind word or a misunderstanding.

Within a few weeks I was duly asked to attend before a special sub-committee which had been formed to interview two or three of the candidates who had been selected from the hundreds who had applied for the post. Grave objection was taken both by this special committee and later by the grand committee, to my condition that I should be allowed to continue my career as a conductor. This and one or two minor obstacles were eventually overcome, however, and on November 3rd, 1910, I was unanimously elected by the Court of Common Council to fulfil the post. Time has proved conclusively that it is a good policy for the head of a great school of music to be an active professional himself. It not only enables him to find work for students who possess real talent, but it compels him to go with the times, and helps him

to realise that what was good enough twenty years ago will not do for to-day. I soon found out that there were many features that required to be improved and altered. To begin with, there was no set curriculum for students who were studying to become professionals. Secondly, most of the professors appear to be only on bowing terms with one another, and there was no place where they could foregather or have a meal in comfort. Thirdly, there was a pitiful lack of comradeship among the students, and nobody seemed to have the smallest interest in anybody else's work. All these things required remedying, but I had to go slowly, because your Common Councillor is not a man to be rushed into anything, though once you convince him that what you want is right, he'll back you up nobly to the bitter end. When I look back on these early days and think how I dreaded and hated those committee meetings, and how I felt that they didn't understand me or I understand them, I marvel at the tact and kindness of the chairman, who was for ever pouring oil on the troubled waters, aiding and abetting me in all my projects and prophesying that before a year had elapsed I should be on the best of terms with the whole committee. How true this pro-

phecy was, it is not for me to say. Certain it is that to-day I look forward with real pleasure to my committee meetings, and that I have a sincere regard and friendship for the members, all of whom seem to vie with one another in trying to say or do kind things to me. To return, however, to my first year's work, I succeeded in establishing a proper curriculum for the serious-minded student, and this quickly proved popular and successful. But the thing of which I shall always remain the proudest is the founding of the Guildhall School of Music Professors' Club. I obtained the consent of the committee to take an entire suite of rooms in the building, furnished them, and presented them to the professors, on condition that they would form themselves into a properly constituted club, and pay an annual subscription, sufficient to cover the yearly expenses. The result far surpassed my most sanguine expectations; the entire staff took up the idea with an enthusiasm impossible to describe, and I can say without fear of contradiction that no club in the world can boast of having a better set of fellows as members, and that it would be hard to equal the splendid feeling of comradeship and brotherhood that exists between them. And this *bonne camaraderie* had an amazing effect on the work

done in the school. We progressed artistically by leaps and bounds, and it wasn't very long before those in the know felt that a new and a great force was at work in the school. And that force can be described in one word—Unity! There is no truer saying than that “Unity is strength,” and the remarkable progress and success of the Guildhall School of Music in recent years is a concrete example of the power of unity. After the successful launching of the club, we quickly got to work to form a Union for past and present students (which can now boast of having hundreds and hundreds of members), and a benevolent fund for the professors, which has proved of eminent value when one of the members has fallen on hard times. If I have written at undue length about all these things, may I be forgiven on the plea that perhaps the School is my favourite child? The professors, the students, the committee, the work are all very dear and precious to me, and I cannot help wanting some of those who are outside to know something of the inner workings of a very vital institution. One of the greatest privileges in my life is to see the promising young student gradually develop into the fully-grown talented young artist. Unfortunately, so many of the swans turn out to be

geese, by not fulfilling their early promise. He is a bold man who would venture to prophesy a successful career for any young student, I care not how talented he or she be. The reason is not far to seek. Let me take the case of a young girl of seventeen with a really good voice. Her parents or friends at once consider her to be a Melba or a Clara Butt, quite forgetting that although a good instrument is a very necessary part of her equipment, it is *only* a part, and it may not be the most important part. On the same principle it might be argued that, because a man buys for his daughter the finest grand pianoforte ever made, she should be considered another Paderewski because she owns such a magnificent instrument. No ! As I have said, the voice is only a part of the necessary equipment. I so often find that ugly girls seem to get the good voices and that pretty girls have poor ones. Then, again, those possessing really fine organs have no musical temperament, no charm, no natural talent for music. All these things are indispensable for a vocalist as well as an instrumentalist. When you get the combination, then it's a question of "Hats off, gentlemen ! A genius !" and that, alas ! is indeed rare. Unfortunately, the imitation article is so often mistaken for the

genuine. I fear that professors themselves are sometimes given to exaggerate the gifts of their pupils, and that they are to be held responsible for a great deal of money being wasted and a great many hopes crushed. I don't infer that they do this purposely, for one moment. On the contrary, I find it quite natural, inasmuch that they get carried away with enthusiasm at the improvement and development for which they are responsible, and which they are in a position to notice more than anyone else. I still hark back to my idea of many years ago, that much heart-breaking and much money could be saved if there were some properly constituted board which young people could appear before, and be advised without prejudice whether they should spend money on their musical education with the idea of becoming professional musicians. It is possible that the board might turn down or overlook one or two talented cases, but they would save so many hundreds from being fooled and wasting their time that their existence would be easily justified.

Speaking Seriously: II, A General Survey



SIR HENRY WOOD AND MYSELF
From a Snapshot taken in Dame Clara Butt's Garden

Speaking Seriously : II, A General Survey

FOR two reasons I have thought it best to end these Variations in serious vein. Firstly, it will enable those who are not particularly interested in music to have done with the book after Variation X; and, secondly, strangers who have glanced through these pages may imagine that I pass my life telling anecdotes or that most of my time is devoted to attempts to making people laugh. As a matter of fact, I am a most serious person, and take my work intensely seriously.

I propose in this Variation to take a general survey of the state of music in this country. I would like to make it quite clear that I have no grievances—no axe to grind. I belong to no clique—I have no prejudices for or against any particular school—and, thank God, I am not jealous or envious of a single member of my profession. There is room for us all in this world, and perhaps life might be made a little more pleasant for many of us if we took a little more interest in each other's work and were not quite so absorbed in our own.

I am a great optimist about the present state of the profession. It is thoroughly healthy and sound, and is in every way a vast improvement on what it was twenty-five years ago. I don't think that there are as good concert or oratorio singers to-day as there were then, but, on the other hand, we can boast of infinitely better operatic singers. Undoubtedly we have to thank Beecham for this, because he created the demand and the supply immediately followed. If we were like other civilised nations and had at least one opera house open all the year round, I am quite certain that, with the material to which I have already alluded, we should easily possess the best stock company to be found anywhere. Singers such as Carrie Tubb, Rosina Buckman, Agnes Nicholls, Edna Thornton, Walter Hyde, Robert Radford, Frederick Ranalow, and many others can easily hold their own against any foreign operatic rivals. I am not suggesting they are "stars" of the first magnitude; but Melbas and Carusos are not required—nay, would be out of place—in such a company. It is the ensemble that counts, and with such talent in our midst we could have the most perfect ensemble imaginable. Although I would like to see opera performed in London all the year round with these artists and at prices

that would enable all classes to attend, I still have a hankering for a three months' grand opera season at Covent Garden Theatre, such as Augustus Harris gave us twenty years ago. I am perfectly aware that artistically such a season has but little value. But I *do* like to hear the greatest singers in the world ; and I *do* like to listen to an opera being sung in the language in which it was written ; and I *do* like the sight of the Opera House crowded with Royalty and beautifully-dressed women bedecked with magnificent jewels. I dwell with infinite pleasure on the thrills I used to have on a Patti night, a Melba night, and even a gala night ; and I see no reason why those thrills should not be repeated in these days. The statement that there are but few great singers is, alas ! correct up to a point ; but I would answer it by saying that the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, manages to run a *six months'* season on exactly the lines I have sketched, so that London, the greatest city in the world, should be able to do likewise. I would like to see Drury Lane Theatre the permanent, all-the-year-round, house of opera in English, and Covent Garden Theatre revive its past glorious traditions by giving a season of three months' opera, with artists of all nationalities and the most famous "stars"

that could be engaged. The present dearth of any kind of definite opera season is a scandal, and should be rectified immediately.

It will be readily admitted that, although opera is shamefully neglected in this country, the same charge cannot be brought against us as regards concerts, either in London or the Provinces. As a matter of fact, there are far too many concerts given all over England. The whole thing is overdone, and is doing more harm than good to the cause of music. How many successful artistic concerts are there? Or I'll ask even a more direct question: *How many artistic concerts actually pay?* If you take away the Sunday concerts, the Promenades, and a few "star" appearances of Melba, Kreisler, Clara Butt, and one or two others, you may safely assume that the rest are run at a loss in London. Whereas in the Provinces a few years ago there was only one impresario who attempted to give concerts in the big provincial cities, Mr. Percy Harrison of Birmingham, there are now half a dozen all doing the same thing. The result is that pater-familias is inclined to close his purse with a snap and say to his better half: "Choose which series of concerts you care to go to, but I only pay for one, and I should prefer that to be the *cheapest!*"

In cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, there have existed for many years really important local societies, such as the Manchester Hallé Concerts, the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, and the Scottish Orchestral Society. These have done magnificent work in the past, and I know that they are only too anxious to continue that good work ; but it makes it almost impossible for them to obtain a subscription list which will suffice to cover their season's expenses when the city is literally swamped with the announcements of counter-attractions of a somewhat similar nature. In one way those who live in the Provinces are much more fortunate than Londoners. They at least are spared the innumerable instrumental and vocal recitals which are given by both British and foreign artists, many of whom are the misguided victims of their ridiculously enthusiastic friends. I can speak very feelingly on the subject—not because I attend them, but because I devote a good deal of my time endeavouring to persuade the young people under my direction *not* to rush into print and *not* to appear before a public until they are ready. If a young fellow writes a song, he at once wants to get it published ; if a girl has one or two concertos at her fingers'

ends, she immediately wants to give a concert. I don't blame the young people, because it seems to me quite natural that they should want and should seek publicity. But I do severely blame their parents or guardians or whoever is responsible for aiding and abetting these youngsters in their ill-advised attempts to claim public attention. It must not be assumed, however, that I am opposed to recital-giving as a practice. On the contrary, I fear it is the only way for any artist who is unknown to obtain recognition—or, at least, one of the easiest ways. Not that a single recital is of much use to anybody, though I know of a case where a foreign violinist was acclaimed by the critics to be an exceptionally great artist after his first and only recital, with the result that numerous engagements were offered him at once. But exceptions of this kind only go to prove the rule. If a young artist's circumstances will allow him to give two or three recitals and an orchestral concert, then assuredly success will follow if he is made of the right stuff. And it is in this connection that so many parents grievously fail to grasp their responsibility to their children. The average father considers that, when he has paid for three or four years' musical education, he has entirely done his duty, and that

all his child has to do is to walk out of the building and earn his living. This is not only a fallacy, but is practically asking for and expecting the impossible. If you look over the list of successful artists before the public to-day, you will find that nearly all of them began by giving their own concerts. The point I wish to make is, that a parent must consider the payment for his child's education as only *part* of his preliminary expense, and that it is absolutely essential that there should be enough money provided to give the young artist (when *really* ready) a proper and dignified *début*. And what a chance there is for the said young artist to make a big reputation, providing the genius is there!

We have instrumentalists of such remarkable gifts, that I am at a loss to understand how it is that we do not seem able to produce a Kreisler, an Ysaye, a Casals, a Cortot, or a Paderewski. We get amazingly near, but seem just unable to climb the ladder sufficiently high to take us into the realms of genius. I am sure someone will do it, and do it soon ; in the meantime we must wait and believe.

Turning to British composers, here we find a plethora of great talent, a quantity of great promise, and one genius. It does not require

much perspicacity to discover that the genius to whom I refer is Edward Elgar. I heard him aptly described the other day as “the last of the giants;” and I heartily endorse the statement. The man who has given to the world such mighty works as *The Apostles*, *The Variations*, the *Two Symphonies*, the *Violin Concerto*, and *The Dream of Gerontius* must surely be classed amongst the immortals. Blind and indiscriminate gushing is not an essential part of real admiration, and in case I should be accused of “painting the lily,” I would say at once that Elgar, like all his great predecessors, has written many works that are but poor stuff in comparison with those I have named above. I know of no composer, past or present, who consistently wrote music of the highest standard of which he was capable. The tragic part of it is, that a composer is generally known to the public during his lifetime by his smaller and less important works, and that it is only in after-years that the great ones get their proper meed of appreciation. Many a time have I heard the opinion expressed that Elgar’s music is both dull and uninspired. Twenty years ago I heard exactly the same thing said about Brahms, and, as we know, Beethoven had the same charge brought against him during his lifetime. Are we



To Landon Ronald,
With affection and admiration
from Edward Elgar.
Decr 25: 1913.

SIR EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.

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never to realise that we can lay down no fixed standard of beauty ? Must we always wait for posterity to prove the pioneers correct, and shall we still continue to make the same imputation whenever a new work is produced which does not happen to tickle the ear of the layman ? I speak strongly on the point, because I have metaphorically shouted through a megaphone to the public that Elgar's Second Symphony is the greatest symphonic work we have had since the Brahms No. 1—and that *The Apostles* is the greatest work of its kind ; and yet they won't believe me ! It is true that the opportunities of hearing both works are comparatively rare, although I have performed the Symphony innumerable times, and it has always been received with the greatest possible enthusiasm by the audience. My colleague, Mr. Adrian Boult, who gives such an admirable interpretation of the work, has, I believe, identically the same tale to tell. But the neglect of *The Apostles* is even more scandalous, because we have the oratorio habit in this country ; and where one person will go to a serious symphony concert, a thousand will go to hear an oratorio. No work since Elijah was written has had the tremendous success or has been performed more than *The Dream of Gerontius*.

And *why* is it performed so much? Simply because it only requires the engagement of three soloists, whereas for The Apostles at least double the number are necessary. The old cry of pounds, shillings, and pence—pounds, shillings, and pence! It will seem curious to many that I deem it necessary to write at such length about the works of a man whose genius is almost universally acknowledged, and who has been the recipient of every honour, both in this country and abroad, that it is possible to bestow. My only reply is, that I wish any and every one to share my enthusiasm for what I consider the best in the art. Possibly some may read this who have never heard these two noble works. Although I am inclined to blame the concert-giver for not offering the public sufficient opportunity of hearing them, there is no gainsaying the fact that if there were a *demand* for them they would be given. If what I have written should arouse the curiosity of only a few—if it should secure a few hundred new recruits—my object will have been attained. Regarding the other British composers, there are so many clever ones that it would be invidious to mention any particular one. As a general criticism let me just say that I would like to see more music produced of which one could say that it was

really and typically of our soil. There is a tremendous struggle to be original—even at the sacrifice of beauty—and to be modern. And after all what does being modern mean? The modernity of one period is the old fashion of another. Isn't there rather a danger of our being inclined to praise the joy of to-day at the expense of the pleasure of yesterday? On this point I cannot refrain from quoting what a friend once wrote to me: "The spring of yester year may have been more beautiful than the spring of to-day; but to-day we live in to-day's spring. It is fine to live in the spring of modernity, but the leaves are ripening for the fall, and next year there will be another spring."

It is good to think that in one branch of music we can not only hold our own, but easily beat all other European countries—and that is the orchestra. Here undoubtedly we reign supreme, a fact fully acknowledged by every foreign conductor who visits these shores. We have three great orchestras in London which are not to be matched this side of the Atlantic: the Queen's Hall Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra. It is quite unnecessary for me to enter into comparisons or dilate upon their individual merits. One person

prefers this orchestra and another that. This is purely a matter of personal taste, and not a question of merit. I have had the pleasure of conducting all three, but nothing on earth would drag from me the name of the one I prefer. Sir Henry Wood—that superb conductor and dear friend—has often expressed his delight at conducting my orchestra, and I have done likewise whenever I have had the honour to conduct his. The London Symphony Orchestra is a magnificent body of instrumentalists, and the London public owe them a debt of gratitude for the fine work they accomplish. As is known, this orchestra has no permanent conductor of its own. This has many advantages for the public, but few for the orchestra. There is one more orchestra which in my opinion is the finest in Europe, and that is the one which is heard at the concerts given by the Royal Philharmonic Society. This is made up of picked instrumentalists from all three orchestras, and when it is at its full strength it is simply incomparable.

Of conductors it is not my intention to speak. I have a whole-hearted admiration for my colleagues, and no one is more genuinely pleased than I am at the splendid work being done by some of the younger men. I hope it will never be forgot-

ten that the first great conductor of modern times in England was Henry J. Wood. Many have appeared and disappeared since he began his career, but he has always remained pre-eminent. And splendid work does he do, and well-deserved is his success.

Coming to that much-abused body, the critics, here again I find that on the whole we are as well off, if not better off, than many foreign countries. The critics do a decided amount of good and very little harm. They are invaluable to those beginning their career, and seldom injurious to the artist who has made a reputation. Their good opinion cannot be bought, and I find that as a rule they are tolerant and kind. I fear there is rather a tendency in recent years for the critic to fraternise with the artist. This *must* be a mistake, and is much to be deprecated. The critic's duty is to be absolutely unbiased and unprejudiced. This is impossible if artist and critic are on intimate terms. It is often most difficult for one to avoid the other, but in the case of young artists it is essential that they should be criticised on their merits, and not from a merely friendly standpoint. Still, as I have said, the present-day musical critic does his ungrateful job with much tact and much honesty of purpose,

and in one or two cases we get sound musical judgment combined with great literary ability. More cannot be wished.

There are one or two other branches of the profession I could write about—our choral singing, our accompanying, and our organists—but I think I have written enough to prove that my words at the beginning of this article were justified—“The profession is thoroughly healthy and sound.” And thus it is that I believe that music in England will soon attain to the greatest heights, and that foreign nations will be compelled to admit that we have become a force with which to reckon. We rely now on the public. We are in a position to “deliver the goods” if only the public will create the demand. When I was a youngster “the goods” had to have a foreign hallmark stamped on them before the public would accept them. That day should be gone for ever. It is therefore not without a feeling of alarm that I have noticed during the past few months that the Londoner in particular has shown signs of giving preference to everything and patronising everything that comes from Russia. Russian singers, Russian instrumentalists, Russian dancers, Russian composers, Russian everything! I hold no brief against Russian people or Russian things. But I do

protest against any one nation monopolising the market, almost to the exclusion of the home-grown product. Years and years ago it used to be Italy ; then came the turn of Germany, which lasted up to the war. Now it is undoubtedly Russia. I maintain most emphatically that we do not require a monopoly of music imported from any one particular nation. By all means let us have the best of everything. The great French, Italian, German, Austrian, Russian, or American artist should always find a warm welcome here and always will. Heaven forfend that we should become insular in our musical tastes. But there is no possible reason why we should musically adopt as our own any single nation—and that is what we are unfortunately apt to do. I don't find it done abroad. There I find very little reciprocity—too little, in fact. Most other countries are too much taken up with their own music to bother about their neighbours. With us, it is exactly the contrary. We are inclined to be too much taken up with other countries' music to bother about our own. This is wrong. I hope in a small way that I have proved we have the “goods.” And now may I hope that the British public will demand them for all it is worth ?

THE END

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